

FROM THE EDITORS OF GAMERS' REPUBLIC MAGAZINE

MILLENNIUM PRESENTS

1999 VIDEO GAME BUYERS GUIDE AND Y2K PREVIEW

THE ULTIMATE
GAME-RELATED
GIFT GUIDE!



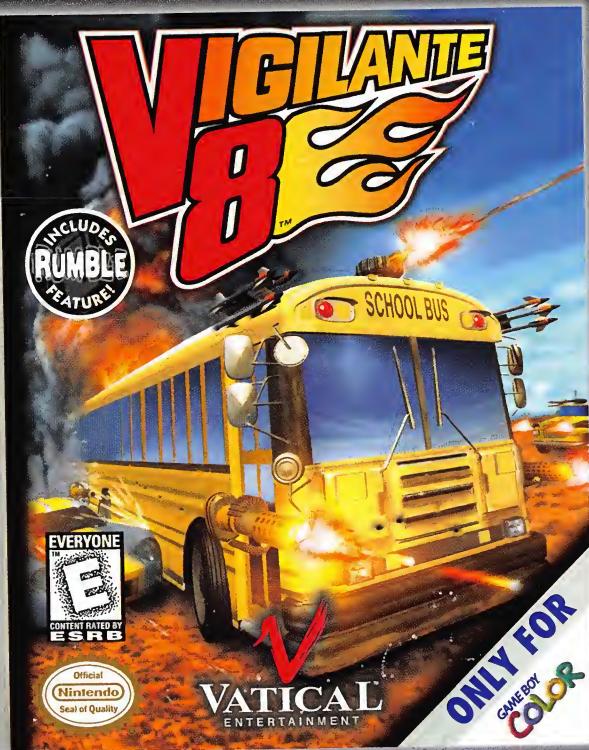
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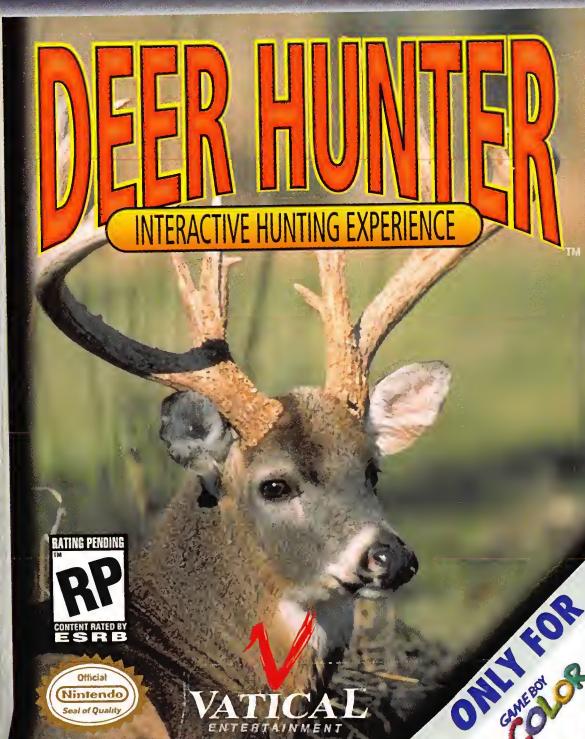
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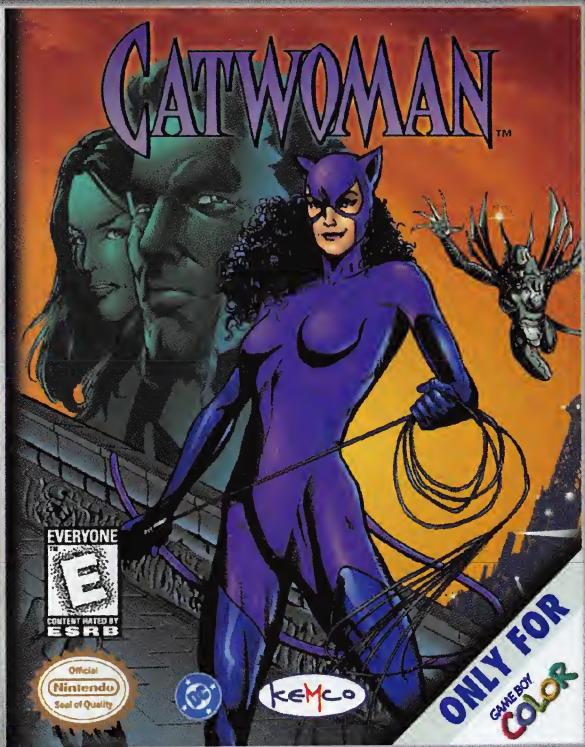


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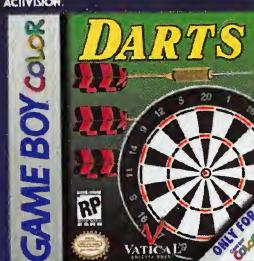
GAME BOY COLOR



FEATURES

- User-friendly, intuitive commands are easy to learn.
- Catwoman features plenty of gymnastic-style fighting moves, but you need to know which ones work best on certain foes.
- Dramatic cinematic scenes between stages keep the action going at a heart-pounding tempo.
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MILLENNIUM PRESENTS

1999 VIDEO GAME BUYERS GUIDE AND Y2K PREVIEW

Welcome to the first ever Gamers' Republic Buyers Guide. Within these pages we have tried to create a book that mirrors the style of *Gamers' Republic* without simply rehashing the year in layouts. Therefore scores have been averaged and text re-tooled for your analysis. We've also included our personal retrospectives and projections, as well as a variety of classic and/or underrated games specifically near and dear to our hearts that you may have missed in the months and years gone by. And finally, no GR project would be complete without a healthy dose of anime, action figures, music, movies, and import games, so we threw those in too. You'll notice we did not include pricing in the guide. This is due to the fluctuation in pricing between larger chains, smaller retailers and online sellers. It's a buyer's market out there, that's for sure. As usual it's all for you, so we hope you like it. Until next year...

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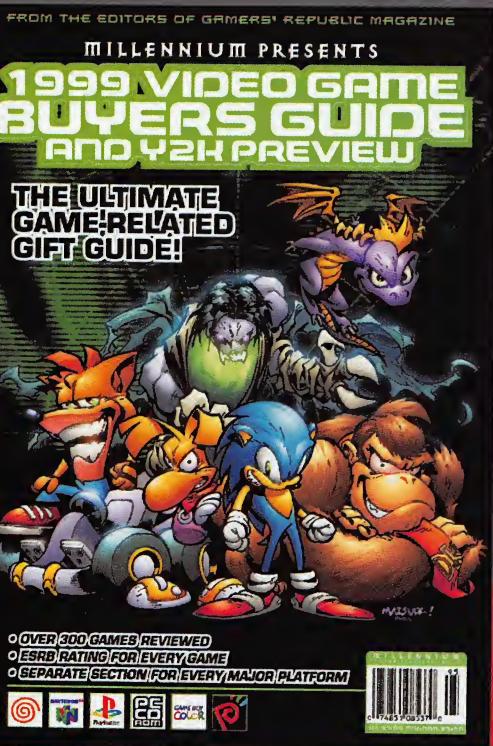
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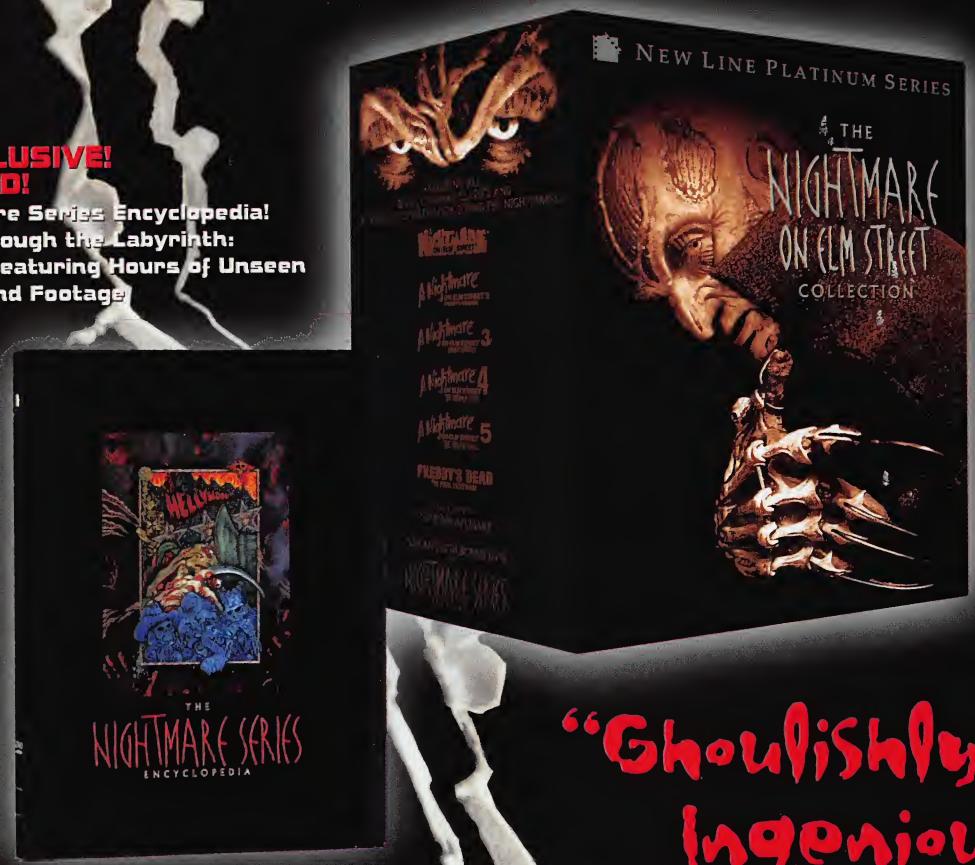


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MILLENNIUM PRESENTS

1999 VIDEO GAME BUYERS GUIDE AND Y2K PREVIEW

ESRB RATINGS



EARLY CHILDHOOD

Titles rated "Early Childhood (EC)" have content suitable for children ages three and older and do not contain any material that parents would find inappropriate.



KIDS TO ADULTS

Titles rated "Kids to Adult (KA)" have content suitable for persons ages six and older. These titles will appeal to people of many ages and tastes. They may contain minimal violence, some comic mischief (for example, slapstick comedy), or some crude language.



EVERYONE

As of January 1, 1998, the new "Everyone" designation will replace the "Kids to Adults" rating. Titles rated "Everyone (E)" have content suitable for persons ages six and older. These titles will appeal to people of many ages and tastes. They may contain minimal violence, some comic mischief (for example, slapstick comedy), or some crude language.



TEEN

Titles rated "Teen (T)" have content suitable for persons ages 13 and older. Titles in this category may contain violent content, mild or strong language, and/or suggestive themes.



MATURE

Titles rated "Mature (M)" have content suitable for persons ages 17 and older. These products may include more intense violence or language than products in the Teen category. In addition, these titles may also include mature sexual themes.



ADULTS ONLY

Titles rated "Adults Only (AO)" have content suitable only for adults. These products may include graphic depictions of sex and/or violence. Adults Only products are not intended to be sold or rented to persons under the age of 18.



RATING PENDING

Product has been submitted to the ESRB and is awaiting final rating.

LEGEND

GRADE

The GR staff uses an A+ to F grading system: an A+ is a game everyone should own, a C is an absolute average game, and an F is a game that people should be fired for making



No. OF PLAYERS

Now that you know what these numbers mean, we know you can figure this one out.

RATING

These are the ratings that the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) has given this game, to help you better tell who this game may be appropriate for. For more information, check the descriptions to the left or look them up at www.esrb.com.

GR

YEAR IN REVIEW

DRIVE HALVERSON

FROM THE EDITORS OF GAMERS' REPUBLIC

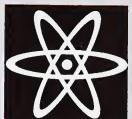


In 1999, the video-game industry finally emerged from that all-too-familiar rut of following one trend too vigorously. In previous years, the first-person shooter and fighting genres commanded too much authority, and RPGs, adventure, and platformers, too little. In 1999, with Namco and Capcom providing a steady diet of fighting games, the arena was healthier than ever, without being oversaturated. The same can be said for first-person shooters. The best companies, like Sierra and id, are keeping those guns-a-swingin' online and on console, rather than every other 3rd party with a developer kit and cash for an engine making a me-too blood bath. 1999 saw more quality RPGs than any year previous, along with a steady stream of adventure games like Shadowman, Jet Force Gemini (my game of the year as of October) and Soul Reaver, and action/platforming games like Rayman 2 and EWJ 3D. The dancing trend also continued to flourish, and while the word "mainstream" scares the crap out of me, it no doubt helped bolster the female and non-enthusiast demographic. Unlike much popular opinion, it's my belief that those people will either become enthusiasts or remain on the outskirts. So, while I believe catering specifically to that demo suicide, I do believe a few good "etc." games here and there are good to keep things happy on the home front. That way, when you go out to buy that new console you can say, "Look honey, we can both play!" Or, "Look, it plays DVDs too!" Beyond that, I've honed my skills for the last 10-plus years for the next Castlevania, not to follow color commands and button prompts, or walk around like a drone online leveling up a friggin' elf. Not that I don't respect online gaming; I do. I know lots of people that are totally hooked on the online experience who can probably shoot out the lit end of a cigarette from 50 feet. It's just not for me. Someday, someone is going to construct

an online platformer, and then I'll see you all there. Of course, '99's most blessed event was the re-emergence of Sega with the Dreamcast. It's going to be great fun seeing Sega's second-generation games emerge alongside Sony's pricier and more powerful PS2 as we wait with bated breath for Nintendo to drop the other foot in both the console and hand-held arenas. Not to mention (gulp) Microsoft. But billion-dollar Bill will need third-party support. My money says he clones Miyamoto and the entire AM2 and Rare staff by this time next year. What's scary is that he could actually afford to do it. 1999 was a great year; in 2000 I may just explode.



BRANDY FIECHTER



Message to the industry: don't let 2D gaming die. In a year lopsided with miscalculated attempts at 3D game design, an opus like Silhouette Mirage - the ultimate expression of 2D gameplay - was the antidote for the mainstream venom. How long it had been since a truly special 2D action game was released, and Silhouette Mirage only managed to stir my lament of the deathly gap in its genre.

True, Silhouette Mirage was one of the highlights of the year, but it was released on the Saturn, in superior form, nearly two years ago - and yet the game still falls on my year's best list. A game like this is as durable as they come. But with this year showcasing the remarkable ascension of video games, the venerable methods of the past are falling into antiquation, and the future, like it or not, is a place where 3D is king.

This can be a good thing. Take Rayman 2 and Sonic Adventure. Here are two games that evoke classic elements while showing how artistically accomplished 3D gaming can be. These are games I loved in the past, and love just as much in their radically altered appearance.

While I view 1998 as a stronger year for games, 1999 serves

more as a transitional period, ushering in a new wave of the industry. The Dreamcast has shown us that rich possibilities lie ahead - Soul Calibur is an extraordinary achievement - and that misguided ones are not out of the question: most games on the system are more concerned with sophistication over inventiveness.

Perhaps the most important thing to come out of this year's crop of games is the exceptional diversity. Everyone has a game to cherish: role-playing has finally been fully represented, character-driven games abound, driving and fighting are creating a log jam.

Above all else, I'm thrilled to see an emphasis on cinematics and atmosphere in games. Silent Hill, Resident Evil 3 and Dino Crisis are three intense, affecting, deeply involving experiences that, while all existing in like company, are examples of where gaming is heading for the new millennium.



MIKE HOBBS



There was no Zelda or Metal Gear for me this year, but there were some marvelous gaming experiences to be had in 1999. Nearly every genre received healthy additions, and the Dreamcast energized the American gaming scene with a strong launch in September, and that was great to see. But it won't be till after Christmas before we can tell whether the DC has the legs to grow a healthy user base in the interim before Sony unleashes the PS2 in this country, probably later next year. I think they have a decent shot in America, but with the PS2 debuting just next March in Japan, it may be a foregone conclusion that the DC's days are seriously numbered there. Recent delays of some their biggest titles certainly doesn't render them fit to take on the Sony juggernaut.

No matter, just as long as there are good games to play, I can easily forget about the struggle of the hard-

ware giants, and this year, there was plenty to keep me occupied. Though we didn't see very much gameplay innovation, refinement and evolution made all three consoles look good. Soul Calibur, Dino Crisis, Biohazard 3, Donkey Kong 64, Final Fantasy VIII, Gran Turismo 2, and Wipeout 3 are just a few of the highlights for me. With PS and N64 getting on in years, it's expected that the hardware be fully utilized, and we saw that this year too in games like Crash Team Racing and Ridge Racer Type 4. And I had great fun with portable systems in 1999, from Ghost N' Goblins on WonderSwan to Metal Slug on Neo Geo Pocket Color. Seeing the PS2 in action at the TGS was another milestone of 1999, even if the playable software wasn't quite up to what was being shown on video. Rest assured, however, the system will technically astound when it's released next year.



DAVE SMITH



Ah, 1999. The year I went from MERC Sub Issue Geek writing about games for fun to Serious Journalist writing about games for a living. The funny thing is, it doesn't feel that much different.

This was, in my mind, the best year possible to get started in this business. Last year was the year of *Zelda*, the One Big Thing, but this was the year of *Sonic*, *Donkey Kong*, *Final Fantasy*, the Many Not Quite So Big But Still Pretty Darn Big Things. The Dreamcast has gone and changed everything, just like they said it would, but as I write this, I've also gotten my first inkling of what the PlayStation 2 might do next year.

Before I get carried away, though, that's next year. The way things are shaping up, by the time 1999 ends I'll have played the best games ever in all my favorite genres. *Soul Calibur*, the best fighting game ever. *Gran Turismo 2*, which I'll boldly call the best racer ever just on account of the Shelby Super Cobra. *Final Fantasy VIII*, my favorite RPG ever; upon reflection, I won't call it the best, for fear of the cries of "dogpile on Reverend Dave!" that would undoubtedly erupt.

Amid the big names, there are also some small ones that deserve attention. I don't recall whether *Parappa* or *Bust-a-Move* or *Beatmania* came first (doesn't really matter, since Breakdancing on the Commodore 64 beat them all by a long shot), but I think it's safe to say that Konami has taken the rhythm game and made it their own this year. I can now happily die, having played *Guitar Freaks* and *Dance Dance Revolution*. The mind-bending PlayStation user base has allowed an unprecedented breadth of other Japanese weirdness to come over here; we've gotten to check out everything from *Grandia* to *Irritating Stick*.

Speaking of which, this was the Year of the RPG that everyone

said last year was going to be. Last year we mostly got the stuff that was rushed out, after *FFVII* killed everyone's preconceptions about the genre. This year we got the quality games companies took their time over: *Lunar*, *Thousand Arms*, *FFVIII*, and near and dear to so many hearts, *Grandia*, a game we never thought we'd get to play. But then that's the joy of video games today. There are so many things right at our fingertips that, once upon a time, we never dreamed we'd see.



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0991725-0019AU/ Playstation all soft '99

TOM STRATTON



Out of the countless sequels and updates, only three brand spankin' new entries earn respect of heavy rotation both at home and in the office. My first bit of praise goes to Visual Concepts. Print and television advertisements lend the belief that the Dreamcast unit is what makes games like NFL 2K and NBA 2K play and adjust to the user. The reality is that only because Visual Concepts has a deep passion and understanding for genuine re-creation do the games possess insane AI routines. At times, I explain my enthusiasm to friends through a quick game, failing to hand over the second controller and include them in the experience - a trait I am still unable to shake.

The third game to really inspire me is Tony Hawk's Pro Skater. Periodic skate sessions have increased to daily grinds as I scope spots while driving to and from work. This game is out of control. The balance of control and level design is perfect. I have no complaints whatsoever. I finally have a companion for Gran Turismo, which is displayed on its own shelf.

Electronic Arts has provided precarious offerings throughout the year. Each seasonal update has granted better visuals, but I want to actually enjoy playing even when playing without a friend - something I can't honestly say I have. Maybe it is just the hardware they have been restricted to. I sure hope so. Of course, their PC sports titles have reached

heavenly status. NHL 2000 is a perfect example.

Outside the sports scene, Silent Hill, Soul Reaver, Soul Calibur, Final Fantasy VIII, Sonic Adventure and Power Stone have all sunk deep into my skin. Others include Wipeout 3 and the imports Guitar Freaks and Bust a Move 2. Looking back on what was on the menu and what I ordered, I am glad to see a healthy balance. With dishes looking better in 2000, I am glad I still have an unmarred appetite for games.



MIKE PUCCINI



The highlight of 1999 for me was being honored with a position on the GR editorial staff. On the gaming front, as a Nintendo junkie, my year was sandwiched between two Zen-like experiences: finishing the epic Zelda 64 at the beginning and starting Donkey Kong 64 at the end. Mario Golf and Jet Force Gemini were tasty, filling, meat substance in-between.

It was a shame early in the year when the video game industry came under fire as a scapegoat for bad parenting (we can't let them continue to do that).

The fact that the launch of Dreamcast was record-setting took me by surprise. Although, the system did impress me with an arcade perfect port of House of the Dead 2, brilliant versions of NFL Blitz and NFL 2K, and the masterful Soul Calibur.

At the recent Tokyo Game Show in Japan, Sony unveiled the PlayStation 2. I was speechless watching footage of PS2 games like Tekken Tag Tournament, Ridge Racer, Gran Turismo 2000, and the Matrix-like action game Bouncer.

This year, Nintendo announced the name of their next system, Dolphin, and released some basic specs on the unit. I was looking forward to playing Perfect Dark, but the title was delayed to next spring. The Game Boy Color gave me a reason to buy AA batteries again.

The PlayStation stole some Dreamcast launch-day thunder with the brilliant FFVIII. Other excellent PS games I enjoyed were Dri-

ver, Syphon Filter, Silent Hill, Dino Crisis and Tony Hawk's Pro Skater.

This year I became reacquainted with PC gaming. Kingpin was numbingly cool (Cypress Hill rules). C&C: Tiberian Sun reclaimed the RTS throne. Also impressive was The Wheel of Time.

Looking back, I guess the year was pretty exciting overall, and lucrative, as the industry neared \$8 billion in sales. The one final thought I had was that I'm concerned with the advent of games that require you to do decidedly non-video game related activities: play guitar, play drums, pretend you're a DJ, a dancer, a rapper. Look, if you want to play video games, play games. If you want to sing and dance, go to Sweden. (I don't know what that means, I just thought it'd be a cool way to end this article.) PeacE. Pooch.



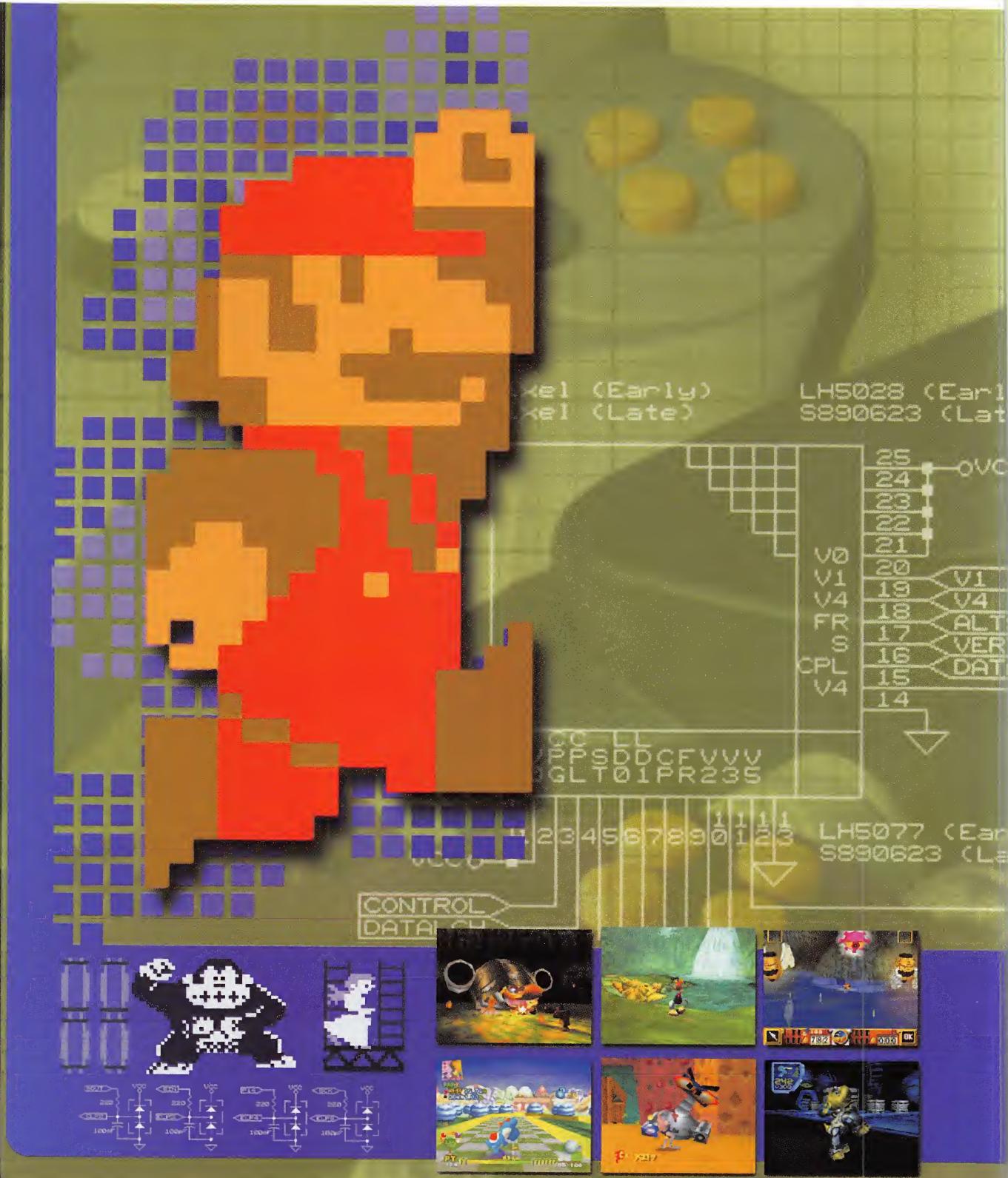


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CPU: 64-bit RISC CPU (Custom R4000 series)
-Clock Speed: 93.75 MHz

Memory: RAMBUS D-RAM 36 Mbit
-Transfer Speed: Max. 4,500 Mbit/sec.

CO-PROCESSOR:
-RCP: SP (Sound and Graphics) and DP (Pixel Drawing) incorporated
-Clock Speed: 62.5 MHz

RESOLUTION: 256 x 224 - 640 x 480 dots
-Flicker-Free interlace mode support

COLOR: 32-bit RGBA pixel colorfram buffer support
-21-bit color video output

DIMENSIONS: Width 10.23" x Depth 7.48"
x Height 2.87"

GRAPHICS PROCESSING:
-Z Buffer
-Anti-Aliasing
-Texture Mapping:
 Tri-Linear filtered MIP-map interpolation
 Perspective correction
 Environment mapping

WEIGHT: 2.42 lbs



ニシテンドウ六十四





NINTENDO 64

A TITLES

BEETLE ADVENTURE RACING

Grade

A-

1-4

Rating



Developer

EA Canada

Publisher

Electronic Arts



Smartly licensing Motor Trend Magazine's '99 Import Car of the Year, Volkswagen Beetle, for this exclusive N64 endeavor, EA has crafted a racer around it that may well be one of the best on the system. The models themselves are pristine beauties that glimmer as the terrain reflects off of their bulbous frames, and the hip drum 'n' bass accompaniment and Miyamoto-like level intros are cool as well, adding polish to an already thoroughly choice racer. At the core of this well-put-together game is a successful, skillfully-executed mixture of racing and adventure elements. Each and every locale is laced with a vast assortment of shortcuts and hidden

areas, as well as crates that, when broken, render temporary bursts of Nitro or points that lead to bonus items (like new arenas for the Beetle Battle) and cheat codes. The engine at work is shockingly robust, exhibiting a steadily smooth frame rate through vastly populated courses, textured skillfully and designed with the driver in mind. Fahrvergnügen!

DONKEY KONG 64

Developer

Rare

Publisher

Nintendo

Donkey Kong 64 brings the king of the video-game jungle to the N64 in majestic fashion. Everything you imagined this game would be is probably correct...and then some. Created by the same Rare team responsible for the SNES DKC series, they made sure to

include everything that you fell in love with back then. The levels in the game are so massive that the RAM expansion pak is required to play this amazingly ambitious adventure; don't worry if you don't have one, because it's included with the game. With great replay value, DK64 requires players to return to previously explored areas with newly acquired characters, in order to complete all of the game's 200 objectives. There are five playable characters - Donkey, Diddy, Tiny (she's just like Dixie), Lanky and Chunky - each equipped with a variety of special moves, a special weapon and the ability to play a musical instrument. The game is absolutely massive; you'll be playing for weeks.



Grade

A-

1-4

Rating



NINTENDO

Nintendo 64
all soft '99

725-0019AU/ Gamers' Republic Buyers Guide '99

EARTHWORM JIM 3-D

Developer Vis Interactive

Publisher

Rockstar

You think you know Jim? We thought we did too, but in 3D the worm works better than ever. All of that orig-

inal shiny equipment, like 360 degree shooting, helicopter, balloon and grapple head, and the head whip really come in handy in Vis' vision of the worm's 3D adventure to escape his own twisted mind. You'll marvel at the amazing environments, which equal the system's best without a Ram Pak (!), laugh hysterically at crazy jokes and busted situations, like whipping Elvis in the ass to get him to jump pits or propelling yourself into the air with titanic farting power, and rock to the game's happenin' tunes. One of the year's best N64 games, do not miss EWJ 3D. Alrighty.

Grade



Rating

Nintendo 64
all soft '99**GOEMON'S GREAT ADVENTURE**

Developer KCE Osaka

Publisher

Konami



1



After completing one of '98's most underrated games, *Mystical Ninja 64*, we thought the possibility slim that Konami would brave the U.S. market again with their zaniest Japanese franchise. We're both impressed and happy that they have. *Goemon's Great Adventure* is one of only a few 1999 games blessed with 2D gameplay, and it's a testament to the category's prowess. The game melds inspired 2D

sidescrolling polygonal fare - action-platform style - with role playing and puzzle-

solving to brilliant effect. The towns are truly inspired works, exuding great detail and crazy cultures, the visuals throughout the action sequences are meticulously designed and brought to life, and the impact scenes are a testament to the Osaka team's Nintendo 64 abilities. I also like the addition of time-sensitive action: the enemies change as night falls and day breaks. Of course, the cherry on top is the return of... PLASMA!



JET FORCE GEMINI

Developer Rare Publisher Nintendo

With Jet Force Gemini, one of the years best, Rare have created a space opera that contains just about every type of gameplay element you can imagine. Demanding

from
play-
ers
equal

amounts of shooting and dodging prowess, platforming ability, killer instinct, and smarts, JFG's tailor-made for intermediate and advanced players looking for a serious challenge from their N64. Within JFG there are also two types of racing games (!) top down and third person, 20 plus weapons, 16 hidden characters to unlock for multi-player action, a plethora of astounding effects, like reflections, climate changes (including realistic rain and fog) and big, bad (very bad) bosses. The environments are huge, laced with tunnels and vast complexes and play host to some truly memorable action and adventure as you battle Mizar and his minions of smart bugs. Bringing all of this wonder to life are hours of cinema, and one of the best soundtracks you'll ever hear on the Nintendo 64.



0991725-0019AU/ Nintendo 64 all soft '99

S890623 (Late)

MARIO GOLF

Developer Camelot Publisher Nintendo

Grade A-

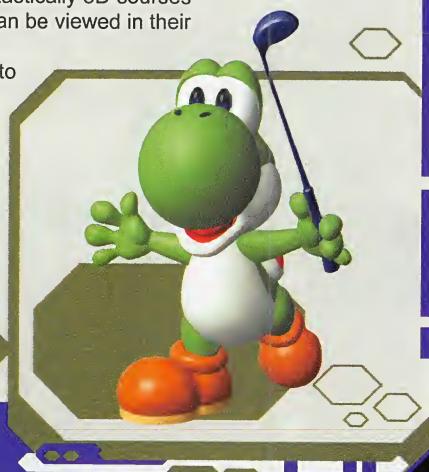
Rating E
Everyone
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

1-4

Nintendo delivers a brilliant and delightful game of golf, Mario style. A collaboration between Nintendo and Camelot Software Planning (the makers of the fantastic Hot Shots Golf for PlayStation), Mario Golf 64 is fun, challenging, humorous, and filled to the brim with classic Nintendo touches. This is a wonderfully addictive and cute game, with variety and infectious cheerfulness coming out of its ears. The classic Nintendo characters are very appealing in this setting, especially when you discover that each of them has eight different lit-

tle voice samples that can be activated by the D-pad and C-buttons. And, of course, you'll find plenty of Nintendo scenery throughout the game's numerous and fantastically 3D courses that, like Hot Shots Golf, can be viewed in their entirety.

Mario Golf 64 is as easy to pick up and play as any Nintendo game, yet gives you so much to discover and so many challenges that it is by no means easy. And it naturally follows that the game is an unqualified blast with four players. "It's-a wonderful!"



0991725-0019AU/ Nintendo 64 all soft '99



RAYMAN 2

Developer Ubi Soft Publisher Ubi Soft

Magical. Enchanting. Engaging. Just some of the words that may come to mind as you guide Rayman through his latest adventure on the Nintendo 64. Rayman 2 is sewn together with the utmost care and precision, creating an immersive, cinematic experience. Breakthrough gameplay stints segue into masterful cinematics with every passing level, and the cast

of characters is nothing short of extraordinary. A complex mixture of diverse and ingenious gameplay elements, R2 takes the player through some of the most fantastic landscapes ever seen on any platform, and the payoff after each-a meeting with Polochus is a jaw-dropping experience. Ubi Soft uses every trick in the book and throws in some new ones of their own designed to astound you. The gameplay in Rayman 2 is somewhat advanced, aimed squarely at the seasoned platformer, although beginners will make their way eventually, and probably love every second spent doing sections over.

Nintendo 64
all soft '99

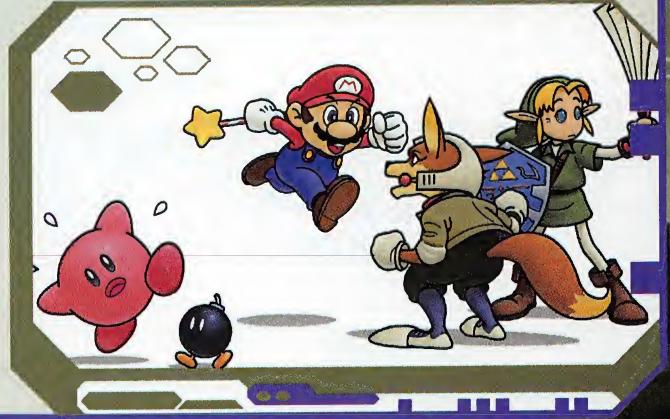
SUPER SMASH BROS.

Developer HAL Publisher Nintendo



What a marvelous idea: Nintendo's most indelible figures against each other in a manic battle for supremacy. From Mario and Link to Samus and Donkey Kong, the video game greats exchange punches, kicks, slashes, explosions and throws with one goal at hand: pound the opponents silly until they can't make it back to the arena. There's no escaping the allure of fighting in a Nintendo universe: a Zelda setting with classic tunes is priceless. Pounding out simple button combinations and collecting the occasional power-up typifies the

Smash Bros. experience. The game is simple but fun; jump into the four-player competition and Smash Bros. plays its strongest hand, offering hours of trash-talking mayhem. On the N64, multiplayer gaming doesn't get much better than this.





NINTENDO 64

B TITLES

Grade
BRating

Developer KCE Kobe

Publisher Konami

CASTLEVANIA 64

After Contra's less-than-auspicious 3D incarnations, many were skeptical of this first polygonal venture into Dracula's realm. However, it's turned out pretty well. The atmosphere is still suitably spooky, the opposition is well-balanced, all the classic weapons and items are there (fetch holy water and a boomerang!), and the control rarely frustrates.

While SOTN's Alucard carried a sword with few problems, though, CV64's non-whip-wielder, Carrie, is more than a little too powerful for an entertaining game. Serious vampire hunters are advised to play as the other character, the classically armed Richter Belmont. After all, that's how you're meant to kill Dracula, with naught but

your sharpest reflexes and your trusty whip.



DUKE NUKE 'EM: ZERO HOUR

Grade
B+Rating

Developer Eurocom

Publisher GT Interactive

Many a critic boo-hooed at Duke's difficulty while our reviewer basked in it. While Zero Hour is definitely difficult, especially if prodded like a



race horse, it's totally doable when played methodically. Impressive in just about every way - graphics, control, level design, diversity, and sound - it also brings something to the system it desperately needs (a hard-core 3D action adventure with mature themes) and is incredibly hard to put down. If Eurocom could have somehow managed a steady 30 fps while maintaining this level of graphic prowess, it would be hard to find a single flaw in the game. If you avoided Zero Hour because you read the wrong review, we highly recommend giving it a shot (pardon the expression), especially if you're looking for a 3D adventure with staying power. The game's loaded with crazy sexual innuendo as well. Duke's got time to bleed.

0991725-0019AU

Grade
BRating

Developer Blam!

Publisher Midway

Midway has really dressed up Gauntlet, with an impressive new hub, lush, tiered locales, smooth animation, wicked spells and massive bosses. The gameplay has remained pretty faithful otherwise (seal portals and lay waste to hordes of spooks, collect and strategically use items, etc.) but it's markedly better in 3D, especially in multiplayer mode, which is really the way this game is meant to be played. The visuals benefit greatly using the RAM Pak, it has a great

gothic soundtrack, and is vastly diverse and scenic for those two- to four-player all-nighters. This is the way to redo a classic!



GEX 3: DEEP COVER GECKO

Grade
BRating

Developer Crystal Dynamics

Publisher Crave Entertainment

With Gex 3, Crystal Dynamics adopted a number of unique features to set their first 3D Gex sequel apart from the pack. The all-new and much-improved media dimension has taken on a grand scale with a Banjo-sized overworld



and some ingenious new level structure. The levels in Gex 3 are

the star attraction. So often designers simplify rather than intensify the platform elements essential to the success of a platformer. Crystal hasn't "dumbed-it-up" at all. In fact, there are genuinely hard jumps in Gex 3. And while you rarely fall to your death, do-overs abound, as they should. The massive pirate ship of Cut Throat Cove is a beautifully detailed polygonal structure, and the towering beanstalk in Fairy Tale provides a truly inspired vertical romp littered with perilous platforming. While G3's designers obviously borrowed some magic from Banjo, they've added enough of their own to make G3 a sequel that fans of the original and newcomers alike will applaud zealously.

LODE RUNNER 3-D

Developer Big Bang

Publisher Infogrames

Lode Runner 3-D serves as a welcome alternative when you feel like dropping your thought processes out of the common video-



game holding pattern and moving into puzzle mode. As in the PC classic, you charge around myriad levels dodging enemies, grabbing treasure and, of course, blowing holes in the floor. It's not always easy on the eyes, but try to forget about the contemptible blur, the stagnant effects, the bland colors, the stuttering frame rate; it's about great action-puzzle gameplay, and what you do eclipses what you see. As challenging as it is addictive, Lode Runner 3-D has appeal for puzzle fans and any gamer searching for a little change in their software lineup.

0991725-0019AU •



MARIO PARTY

Developer Hudson

Publisher Nintendo

Mario Party invites you and three of your favorite gaming partners into the saccharin world of Nintendo to compete in a rollicking video board game. Fifty multi-player mini-games supercharge the proceedings, and here, it's a two-on-two, three-on-one, or four-player versus battle for coins - the key to success in Mario Party. Slot car races, diving for buried treasure, inflating giant Bowser balloons, and controlling a hand cart in teams of two are just a few of the action events you'll encounter. Most events require mad button pressing and some controller-destroying rotation of the analog stick, all designed to make the mini-games fast, hectic fun. The only caveat here is that Mario Party must be played

by two or more for the most enjoyment. The one-player game falls a little flat.



MONACO GP 2

Developer Ubi Soft

Publisher Ubi Soft

The best version of this game is the Dreamcast version, but for those who have yet to make the leap, the N64 Monaco GP is the



next best thing. Featuring better, more buttoned-up graphics and control than the PS version, this pseudo-F1 title benefits from Ubi Soft's evident N64 development savvy.

Twenty-two real-world Formula One courses are the main attraction here, even if Ubi don't have the license for the actual F1 teams and drivers. No matter, this is a good game of open wheel racing, though those not used to the style will have to learn to appreciate a racing game without powerslides. But Ubi Soft have thrown in enough options and skill levels to please nearly anyone.



THE NEW TETRIS

Developer H2O

Publisher Nintendo

It is called The New Tetris, it's essentially new in title alone. Some will bristle at The New Tetris, perhaps rightly calling it a rehash, but others will enjoy the nice graphical touches and gameplay twists, hopelessly lost in the ingeniously simple puzzle. The New Tetris' strongest assets are its visuals: this is the best-looking game of Tetris available. Backgrounds are richly drawn, weather effects create atmosphere and the blocks sport cool little animations. There are seven distinct environments in which to play, such as Japan and Russia, but a great many lines must be accumulated to build a new stage. This chal-

lenge alone is enough incentive to devote hours to yet another game of Tetris.



QUAKE 2

Developer

Raster

Publisher

Activision



Quake II on N64 is, of course, the console version of the first-person shooter that has addicted countless PC gamers. But where PC



Quake II will be remembered for its multi-player game, this version is best as a single-player experience. Gameplay comes down to touring a maze of rooms in search of an exit – Gauntlet's kinetic game of find-the-key-and-open-the-door. Of course, every monster standing in the way must be gruesomely dismembered; the enemies, while in need of improvement, die quite satisfactorily, and their aggressive nature keeps the game's energy level cranked up. Be prepared to take precision to the next level as you grasp the analog aiming system which requires a surgeon's touch for accuracy.

0991725-0019AU

Developer Sucker Punch

Publisher Ubi Soft

ROCKET

As heavy on exploration, discovery, and puzzle solving as it is on action, Rocket is a true hybrid. All the items in the game have realistic weight and physics and Rocket can attach to and use much of them. Rocket gets high marks for ingenuity right out of the gate, but playing it is even better. Besides the levels and tasks Rocket must overcome to restore order to the circus, the game is littered with ingenious mini-games and even features a roller coaster creation mode that's remarkably close to the real thing. From first time developer Sucker Punch, Rocket's sure to be another feather in Ubi Soft's cap.

SHADOWGATE 64

Developer Infinite Ventures

Publisher Kemco

In the early '80s, Kemco had a legendary title for quite some time with Shadowgate on the NES. For the N64, Kemco has returned

with a deeply atmospheric and intriguing sequel, and thanks to developers Infinite Ventures, they've managed to maintain the fine reputation of the Shadowgate name. One of the most impressive aspects of the game is the control schematic. It makes exploring easy and enjoyable. The exploration itself is very well conceived, offering loads of environment to interact with as you solve dozens of cunning puzzles. Shadowgate 64 is a recommended title. It's a great sequel to be sure, loaded with mystery and puzzles, and now in full 3D.

SHADOW MAN

Developer Iquana UK

Publisher Acclaim

The sheer scope of this game is awe-inspiring. The closest thing to actually slipping into insanity, Shadow Man's numerous portals - which lead to wonderfully complex levels laden with multiple paths and intriguing puzzle elements - are linked by a complex network of infested tunnels. As you traverse them, Samus flashbacks abound as you jog past the numerous impassable barriers that can only be accessed once you attain the ability marked on each. Ultimately, Shadow Man gains abilities - like swim through fire, use various voodoo weapons, and traverse the real world using his Shadow Powers - to kill "The 5"-serial killers intertwined in a complex, intriguing story. The quest for Dark Souls and items becomes a feverish quest, much like the legendary Metroid. The

game's ambience is also commendable. The enemies are relentless, and the music, a disturbing blend of unholy chants and murmurs, drives it all home.

SNOWBOARD KIDS 2**B-**
1-4**Rating**
EVERYONE
ESRB**Developer** Radym**Publisher** Atlus

In a game like Snowboard Kids 2, the restrictions of a reality-based design are stripped away, and there is a liberating freedom to do just about anything. Snowboard Kids 2 grasps this freedom tightly, although not to the degree it could have.

The cast of puckish characters must perform tricks and gather coins on the many tracks to build a high score. Once enough money has been earned, upgrades can be made to their snowboards and mini-events and hint rooms can be entered. Scattered touches, like a ski lift and clothing that matches level color schemes,

make the game even more appealing. Add a great multi-player experience, and Snowboard Kids 2 becomes hard to put down.

**SOUTH PARK****Grade**
B+
1-4**Rating**
MATURE
ESRB**Developer** Iguana**Publisher** Acclaim

While South Park is highly comedic, it's also deep in the gameplay department and quite engulfing. Our reviewer turned off Turok for South Park and



never looked back. When you're not cracking up, you'll be fully engrossed by the inspired search and destroy gameplay, complete with hi-res graphics, courtesy of the 64's Ram Pak. Iguana is to be commended for respecting the author-tah of one of the best things to hit cable TV and the cinema in the last decade. South Park actually came out just before Christmas '98, and we know the entire team worked insane hours from the outset to make that date. We thank them, as they definitely made last Christmas a little sweeter. If not for the fearsome fog, South Park is low on flaws and high on playability and comic relief. Plus, where else can you heave urine-soaked snow balls at mutated turkeys and alien scum?

STARCRAFT 64**B**
1-2**Rating**
T
ESRB**Developer** Mass Media**Publisher** Nintendo

For all you RTS fans, this is an impressive port of Blizzard's best-selling PC version. At first we didn't think it would work on the console, but it transfers nicely because of the N64's graphic capabilities and the intuitive use of the joystick. Obviously, the graphics aren't as lush as the PC version, and the mission-briefing FMV is absent, but the gameplay is completely in tact. As a matter of fact, all of the PC missions are included, as are some from an expa-

nion disk. StarCraft for the N64 captures the essence of the RTS genre and plays nicely.

**STAR WARS EPISODE ONE: RACER****Grade**
B+
1-2**Rating**
EVERYONE
ESRB**Developer** Lucas Arts**Publisher** Lucas Arts

This insanely fast racer, built around Episode One's thrilling Pod race scene, succeeds as a fun game in its own right, much as Rogue



Squadron did last Christmas. Like that title, Racer's Star Wars theme is simply the delectable icing on the cake. Racer feels faster than the bullet-like F-Zero X because there is actually some scenery going by, and a lot of it very well constructed. The control, so important in a game this fast, is also quite good, with satisfying physics at work as you snake through the often long and serpentine courses. Additionally, there is a drift control button, as well as an in-race engine repair facility, though you trade off some speed for this. Episode 1: Racer is RAM Expansion Pak-compatible, and we recommend you use it, as the game loses a lot graphically without it and becomes a bit of a murky blur. Apart from this, Racer is a solid racing game with a great Star Wars theme.

0991725-0019AU :



Grade



Rating



1

Developer

Ubi Soft

TONIC TROUBLE

Publisher

Ubi Soft

This game creates its own silly mood. The universe and the characters and the way Ed approaches them mingles perfectly with the enchanting soundtrack in a wonderfully peculiar fashion. It certainly brought a smile to our reviewer's face. Controlling Ed and his arsenal is a snap, especially after Agent Espion trains you for each new item. Not only is the camera highly intelligent, complete with three modes to choose from, but there is no fog amongst vast stretches of landscape. Huge rooms stretch far and wide without a hint of fog - quite refreshing given the hazy days of the 64 gone by.

The game is fun, uplifting, visually stunning, deep, and aurally delectable; you would have to be nuts not to add a little Tonic Trouble to your

gaming agenda. TT originally scored an A- with our critics but in the wake of Rayman 2 has fallen half a grade. Still, Tonic is not to be missed.



VIGILANTE 8

Developer

Luxoflux

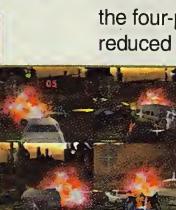
Publisher

Activision

Grade



Although the PS version used more appealing tiling to draw in new textures, it's a moot point, considering the detailed mass of level in view at



every moment. Best of all, the frame rate is even more consistent in normal-res and about the same in high-res. Only in the four-player mode will you ever be affected by a low frame rate and reduced draw distance. In regards to split-screen gameplay, Luxoflux has created very playable Deathmatch modes, rocketing V8's replay value through the roof.

V8 on the N64 offers an exclusive new level, a bonus quest for "Y" the alien, improved graphics, customizable controls, and important multi-player options. The only weak points are the inconsistent, SNES-quality soundtrack and chunky four-player mode. Otherwise, it's a great game.

0991725-0019AU ::

WINBACK

Developer

W-Force

Publisher

Koei

Grade



1-4

WinBack delivers everything you'd expect from a game of covert ops from Koei, rulers of all that is strategic. In the vein of Metal Gear, it's a game of cat and mouse that is unlike anything else in the N64 arsenal. Basically, short of joining up, this is about as close you'll ever come to a realistic infiltration mission without getting bloody. The game is produced in such a way that your connection with the missions is uncanny. This is due in no small part to an excellent control scheme, super-realistic ani-

mation, and first-rate game design. There's even a surplus of versus play modes for up to four players.



WORLD DRIVER

Developer

Boss Game Studios

Publisher

Midway

Grade



World Driver has some great-looking tracks and imitations of real-life cars, but sluggish control and a grainy overall appearance ultimately bring the game

down a couple notches. An enjoyable aspect of WD is the aggressiveness with which you drive - nudging cars into walls and plowing into them from behind, sending them spinning off into the trackside. However, this also exemplifies the slightly schizophrenic nature of the game - it can't quite decide if it wants to be a straightforward arcade racer or a GT-style sim. It's sad that N64 owners can't get anything approaching R4 or Gran Turismo, because those games make something like World Driver look like an also-ran. But for now, WD has plenty going for it.



0991725-0019AU/ Nintendo 64 all soft '99



NINTENDO 64

C/Lower

ARMY MEN: SARCO'S HEROES

AM:SH is a first-generation N64 game living in a fourth-generation world. With its army men concept, run-and-gun gameplay, multiple-objective missions, variety of weapons and a multi-player mode, this game initially comes off strong. But the graphics are poor and the gameplay is shallow, growing old quickly.

Developer 3DO Publisher 3DO



Grade C

1-2

Rating TEEN

CHARLIE BLAST'S TERRITORY

How do you make a game entertaining that's designed to drive you nuts? Simply build it around a gruff and grubby laborer, butt crack and five o'clock shadow in tow, and make him stupid. So it is with Charlie Blast, a Bombuzal for the new millennium. With few brain teasers out there, especially for the N64, Charlie Blast should have no problem finding a home.

Developer Realtime Associates Publisher Kemco



Grade C

1-2

Rating KEMCO

DESTRUCTION DERBY 64

In Destruction Derby 64, you're actually encouraged...heck, required, to run into other cars. Although an overall average game, there is one unique aspect to DD – the ability to swing the camera around the car and drive backwards. The graphics, control and physics are just passable, but it's all about destruction.

Developer Looking Glass Std. Publisher THQ



Grade C

1-4

Rating EVERYONE

FIGHTING FORCE 64

Back when it was conceived in '97, it was somewhat of a novel idea: a Final Fight/Bare Knuckle clone taken into 3D. But by the time it came out for the PS in '98, it was a snore. And we're sorry to say, it still is. If you live for the old-school beat 'em ups, you may find Fighting Force somewhat entertaining, otherwise you'll find this an abuse of 3D.

Developer Core Publisher Crave

Grade D+

1-2

Rating TEEN



OK OVCC

HOT WHEELS

Hot Wheels Turbo Racing is a stunt racing game featuring more than 40 different Hot Wheels cars, five different modes of play, a ton of shortcuts and multiple pathways, dangerous obstacles, and music by hip-hop and alternative bands. Speeding and jumping around extremely colorful, twisting, turning courses is good fun for awhile, but the game loses appeal quickly.

Developer Stormfront Studios Publisher Electronic Arts



Grade C+

1-2

Rating EVERYONE

10μF 25V



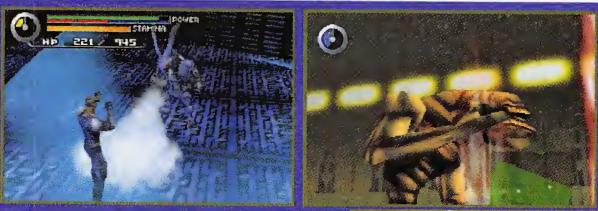
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HYBRID HEAVEN

Hybrid Heaven has some big ideas but stunted execution. So much of it is great in theory, but nothing was handled with any excitement or skill. The battles are original, with a cool interface and turn-based strategy, but a few rudimentary kick and punch combinations ensure continual victory. While technically sound, the massive levels are a march through mediocrity.

Developer Konami

Publisher Konami



Grade C

1-4

Rating

**LAST LEGION UX**

N64 enthusiasts looking for Virtual On gameplay finally have something to cheer about. Well, perhaps "cheer" is too strong. This mech battle game was showcased for years; now that it's here, it's just okay. The varied terrain adds depth to the one-on-one battles, and the designs are pretty nice, although it must be said that the graphics are average.

Developer Hudson Soft

Publisher Hudson Soft

**MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS**

Monster Truck Madness, for being developed in just six months, is quite a feat. It has good albeit loose and bouncy physics, solid balance, a variety of long and interesting tracks, and a buttload of monster trucks. The battle games, like Summit Rumble, are nice extras, but the game is dragged down by questionable control and blurry graphics.

Developer Edge Of Reality

Publisher Take 2



Grade C

1-4

Rating

**RAT ATTACK**

Definitely designed for a younger set of players, Rat Attack puts players in control of The Scratch Cats, a group of felines who use their abilities to rid the world of the rats. Although it combines a mix of action and puzzle games spread through a dozens of levels, this title may be a little too peculiar for some.

Developer Pure Ent.

Publisher

Mindscape

**RAMPAGE 2**

There are two categories of simple game design: well-done, and the other one. Rampage 2 is in the other one. Becoming a giant monster and leveling every city in your way is undeniably appealing. The game's designers' creativity seems set on autopilot, though. The graphics have been enhanced, but the total package feels uninspired.

Developer Avalanche

Publisher Midway



Grade C-

1-3

Rating



47pF V1

V1B

2SA933

OVCC

ROAD RASH 64

Developer Pac. Coast P&L

Publisher THQ



Ride a fast motorcycle, brandish a variety of weapons to hit other riders with, run over pedestrians, and get bashed with a sledgehammer by a butch biker chick – fun. This latest incarnation of the popular Road Rash series is best enjoyed as a multiplayer experience, but extremely poor graphics, bad art and all-too familiar design leave much to be desired.

0991725-0019AU •

STARSHOT

Developer Infogrames

Publisher Infogrames



Each diverse landscape in Starshot, ranging from vast plains to complex armature, is doused generously with enigmatic platforming in the old-school tradition. It's too bad that the game is plagued by a choppy frame rate. The character designs are good, although substance abuse of some kind may have played a part in their creation.

**TWISTED EDGE SNOWBOARDING**

Developer Boss Game Studios Publisher Midway



Twisted Edge has an impressive 3D engine and really nice-looking tracks, but it fails to deliver solid, intuitive gameplay, trading solid, consistent mechanics for mundane play modes. Taking 1080 as the model snowboarding game, TE's imprecise control system and ridiculously haphazard trackside collision just don't stack up.

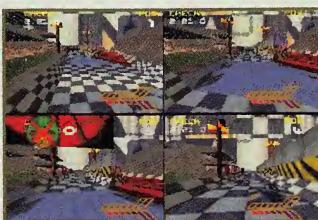
WIPEOUT 64

Developer Psygnosis

Publisher Midway



Wipeout for the N64 is fairly entertaining, but it doesn't really offer anything beyond the original. In fact, it offers less in the one-player game. Also, while there is no fog, pop-up is highly evident and dead ahead at all times. Adding insult to injury, the four-player mode, with its absentee backgrounds, is akin to racing on a linguini noodle.





NINTENDO 64 BIT

review pending

ARMORINES

Jump into your powered suit and waste evil alien bugs. Okay, so the concept isn't that fresh, but Acclaim seems to be on a hot streak with its Acclaim/Variant Comics adaptations like Turok 2 and Shadow Man. Armorines should provide great 3D action in the tradition of those predecessors.



Developer

Probe

Publisher

Acclaim



CASTLEVANIA 64: S.E.

We previewed CV 64 Special Edition in the November issue, stating that the game was for the most part an extension of last year's 3D version. It looks and plays somewhat dated, but still warrants a look for N64 owners who aren't offended by its 3D-ness. When you get right down to it, this really isn't Castlevania. Hopefully, it will turn out to be a quality 3D adventure.



Developer

KCE Kobe

Publisher

Konami



JEREMY MCGRATH SUPER CROSS

While it rang up banner sales on the PlayStation, last year's Jeremy McGrath Supercross was a slightly choppy affair that never saw the light of day on the Nintendo 64. Riding high on that success, we're looking forward to stellar N64, Dreamcast and PlayStation versions this year.



Developer

Acclaim

Publisher

Acclaim



ASTEROIDS HYPER 64

Dun-dun-dun-dun-dun-dun-dun... Yes, it's Asteroids, just all dressed up for the new... er, the Nintendo 64. When I was a wee lad hanging out at the corner liquor store I played this game too much. Seriously, we were sick into Asteroids. Hopefully, this version will bring back those loving feelings. Look for the review in GR soon, although not much needs to be said. It's Asteroids, just prettier.

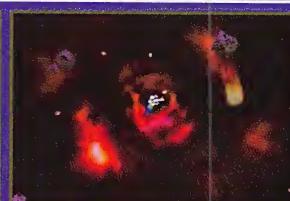


Developer

Syrox

Publisher

Crave



EXCITED BIKE 64

Imagine Wave Race-quality physics applied to a motocross game from a first-party Nintendo developer. Left Field is doing the honors and Excitebike is looking absolutely fantastic. Besides all the usual modes, you can of course build and ride courses of your own design making replayability infinite. Based on what we saw at Space World (the recent Nintendo trade show held in Japan) the game will undoubtedly ring up A grades across the boards. When you see it, buy it.

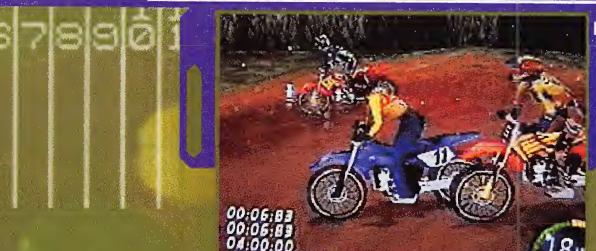


Developer

Left Field

Publisher

Nintendo

00:06:83
00:06:83
04:00:00

18M

47.5

V1

133

LEGO RACERS

Add another title to the plethora of N64 driving games. Lego Racers will allow you to create and drive your own Lego-style auto, as well as create your driver. The whole game is definitely Lego-themed, with environments culled from the popular Lego settings – pirates, space, and so on.



Developer

High Voltage

Publisher

Lego Media



NUCLEAR STRIKE

The makers of Jet Moto 3 chime in on the N64 with this conversion of Electronic Arts' Nuclear Strike. Featuring gameplay that's just a touch easier and boasting all the vehicles and missions of the original, this slightly aged PS title may find a few new fans on the N64.



Developer Pac. Coast P&L

Publisher THQ

**RAINBOW SIX**

The N64 version of Rainbow Six will have Ram Pak support for much-improved graphics and a two-player option so that you and a friend can share 12 missions of black-ops action. The dead-serious presentation and gameplay should be quite a refreshing change from the slightly youthful character of most N64 titles.



Developer Saffire

Publisher Red Storm

**RESIDENT EVIL 2**

Squeezing the entirety of the PlayStation version's FMV into a 512-megabit cart will help ensure the maximum RE2 experience for N64 owners. Better-looking characters will help too, but this installment three, which is much better than two, is already available on the PlayStation. Still, a more than worthy game for N64-only players.



Developer Capcom

Publisher Capcom

**ROADSTERS TROPHY**

Hop into your favorite of over 30 speedy convertibles (including the lordly Renault Sport Spider) and buzz around 10 tracks in a quest to beat the best. Animated polygonal drivers (you can pick one of eight models) and realistic weather kick the realism up a notch.



Developer Titus

Publisher Titus

**PAPERBOY 64**

This is a fresh new take on a true classic. With a decisively retro look, developers High Voltage have done a great job translating the classic hit-and-miss gameplay into 3D, and have thrown in some new elements that take advantage of the jump to 3D.



Developer Midway

Publisher Midway

Midway

**READY 2 RUMBLE BOXING**

How can Midway possibly squeeze Ready 2 Rumble into the N64 hardware? Without the visual punch of the Dreamcast, this game has a formidable challenge ahead if it wants to impress Nintendo owners. R2R's lack of depth, especially in the single-player mode, could be exposed by the N64's comparative graphical limitations.



Developer Midway

Publisher Midway

Midway

**RIDGE RACER 64**

Being designed by NOA's new in-house design group, with the help of Namco, RR64 brings the popular PlayStation racing franchise to the N64. The game will feature a four-player split-screen mode, tracks from the original Ridge Racer and Ridge Racer Revolution, plus three new, exclusive tracks.



Developer Nintendo

Publisher Nintendo

Nintendo



SOUTH PARK RALLY

Expect Nintendo to relax its anti-scatology standards here. Racing may take a back seat to vomit, excrement, copulation, profane descriptions of the aforementioned, and the many deaths of Kenny. If the racing wears, just watch the sideshow, or bring in your friends for four-player action.



Developer Tantalus

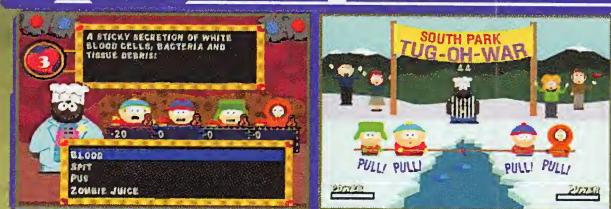
Publisher Acclaim

**SP: CHEF'S LOVE SHACK**

No, this isn't a throwback to those porno games on the 3DO. It's Acclaim's irreverent answer to Mario Party. The meat of the game, will be a South Park trivia competition, but there will also be several intriguing, inexplicable, or flatly unprintable mini-games.

Developer Acclaim Austin

Publisher Acclaim

**SPACE INVADERS**

Space Invaders is receiving an overhaul for its N64 debut. Sometimes change isn't necessarily a good thing: if it ain't broke, don't fix it. The new version will obviously feature better graphics and sound, but will it be as fun as the arcade original, which consumed so many quarters in days gone past?



Developer Z-Axis

Publisher Activision

**SUPERCROSS 2000**

Supercross 2000 is looking extremely promising. Not yet reviewable at press time, and in need of some minor control tweaks and physics adjustments, the game still does a lot right that the other guys haven't quite figured out. This will likely be one of the year's best MX games.

Developer MBL Research

Publisher Electronic Arts

**TAZ EXPRESS**

Taz Express features the entire Looney Tunes cast backing up the eponymous devil. While the characters are favorites, the game's premise is odd: Taz is a delivery devil, and has to protect a box while carrying it from point A to point B. The puzzles and platforming sound interesting, anyway.



Developer Zed Two

Publisher Infogrames

**TOP GEAR HYPERBIKE**

As of press time, we had not yet received the completed Top Gear Hyper Bike for review, although reliable sources close to the development have reported that the game is really something special. Look for a TGHB review in the December or January GR.

Developer Snowblind

Publisher Kemco



0991725-0019AU/ Nintendo 64 all soft '99

TOP GEAR RALLY 2

Realistic car damage, licensed cars (15 to be exact), a random track generator (providing a theoretically infinite number of courses) and four-player split-screen should make this a worthy heir to the excellent Top Gear Rally. The developer is new to the franchise, but hopefully the line of quality titles will continue.

Developer

Saffire

Publisher

Kemco

**V-RALLY '99**

Eleven licensed World Rally Championship cars negotiate 40 tracks located all over the globe in this year's installment of Infogrames' worldwide hit racing series. Realistic car physics and superb 3D backgrounds should make for another excellent rally experience on the N64.

Developer

Eden Studios

Publisher

InfoGames

**XENA: TALISMAN OF FIRE**

It isn't exactly Power Stone, but the N64's four-player Xena fighter offers pretty decent gameplay, with some nice combos and special moves. The TV show's characters don't look half bad composed of polygons; in particular, we offer a big thumbs up for including the well-modeled mug of a personal hero to many of us, Evil Dead 2's Bruce Campbell.

Developer

Saffire

Publisher

Titus

**TOY STORY 2**

With its basic gameplay, simple level design and standard graphic effects, Toy Story 2 is obviously designed for younger players.

The game places Buzz Lightyear in free-roaming, 3-D environments based on the upcoming movie. There are several mini-games and nice level designs throughout.

Developer

Pixar

Publisher

Activision

**WORMS ARMAGEDDON**

The bizarre yet highly addictive strategy/puzzle game remains faithful to the PC in just about every way on the N64. Flying

sheep, exploding old ladies, ninja ropes, banana bombs... it's all there, plus much, much more, ensuring long hours of multiplayer fun.

Developer

Infogrames

Publisher

Infogrames

**40 WINKS**

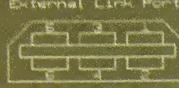
40 Winks is rich in diversity and play mechanics and has a wide range of level and character designs. Imaginative and nicely executed, it's a fantasy game that has "fun for all ages" written all over it. The graphics are extremely colorful, creating a magical world in which you take control of Ruff and Tumble, the two kids at the center of this whimsical game.

Developer

Eurocom

Publisher

GT Interactive





NINTENDO 64

SPORTS 64
B-
Grade
1-2

E
Rating
ESRB

Developer

Iguana

Publisher

Acclaim

Acclaim's Iguana development teams certainly knows how to exploit the N64's graphical capabilities. Each year we're taken aback by how much more detail and realism they can squeeze out of Nintendo's machine and onto the screen. Once again, the new installment of All-Star Baseball is a visual leap beyond its predecessor. The graphics are more or less all that's changed; the interface and control feel the same as last year. While the control scheme may feel a bit labored if you're new to the series, once you adjust, a higher level of gameplay can be reached.



ALL-STAR TENNIS

Developer

Smart Dog

Publisher

Ubi Soft

C-
Grade
1-4

E
Rating
ESRB


The only tennis game for the N64 is a member of the realistic category of tennis games, as opposed to the superdeformed contingent. Whether you like that or not is of course a matter of taste. Regardless, though, All-Star's gameplay is subpar. The digital likenesses of real-life tennis stars are superbly crafted, but the game's re-creation of the finer points of the sport leaves a great deal to be desired. Those interested in a realistic tennis sim are advised to look elsewhere.

0991725-0019AU

BASS HUNTER

Developer Gearhead Ent.

Publisher

Rockstar

B
Grade
1-2

RP
Rating
ESRB


It would have never occurred to us before we played this game, but the Nintendo 64 controller, as far as the way it feels to hold it, is remarkably similar to a fishing reel. Thus Bass Hunter receives an inadvertent addition to its already realistic gameplay. A two-player competitive mode would have been appreciated, but the game still succeeds as a single-player experience. The graphics are suitably detailed (there's not a whole lot of room for flash in a fishing game), and the Rumble Pak is utilized to impressive effect.

BLITZ 2000

Developer Midway

Publisher Midway

C-
Grade
1-4

E
Rating
ESRB


The N64 version of Blitz 2000 is a step ahead of its predecessor in almost every area, but improvements to the graphics and menu system can't make up for the game's fundamental flaw. Blitz is an arcade game, designed to be played a few times for a few dollars. As a single-player game, it doesn't have enough depth to warrant purchasing a pricey N64 cart. The multiplayer mode is the game's one source of significant replay value. If you've got a willing friend or three, you can burn a surprising number of trash-talk-filled hours.

C-
Grade
1-2

E
Rating
ESRB

Developer Angel Studios

Publisher Nintendo

KEN GRIFFEY JR.'S SLUGFEST



With its refined control and interface, Ken Griffey 2 is a much more effectively realized game than Nintendo's last baseball sim. Considering how far the first slugfest had to go in those areas, though, it may take one more installment for the series to live up to Nintendo's reputation for quality. It's difficult to come to grips with those issues; the game lacks a realistic feel when it comes to reading tendencies. Slugfest is moving in the right direction, but needs to offer more innovation in gameplay.

IN THE ZONE '99

Developer

Konami

Publisher

Konami



Recent NBA efforts on the N64 haven't been particularly spectacular. There have been some solid games in the B category, but nothing breaking through into the A range. In The Zone '99 continues that trend. Konami's sports efforts have historically featured better gameplay than their statistically intense American-developed competition, and that holds true when comparing ITZ to NBA Live, but ITZ's graphics and sim elements are definitely weaker.

Grade
B-
1-4Rating
EVERYONE**KNOCKOUT KINGS 2000**Grade
C-
1-2Rating
EVERYONE

Developer

Black Ops

Publisher

EA



Boxing has been missing from the N64 lineup since its debut; indeed, it didn't show up on any consoles for a couple of years. Unfortunately, Knockout Kings, frustrates more than it excites. The player models are big and detailed, looking good when the camera pulls close, but those are detriments as well as assets. The camera prevents the action from being clear and easy to follow, which is troublesome in conjunction with the complex controls, and the framerate is held down by the overly ambitious graphics.

Grade
C+
1-4Rating
RP**MADDEN NFL 2000**

Developer

Electronic Arts

Publisher

Electronic Arts



For its third appearance on the N64, Madden sports excellent control and grand visuals. The opposing team's AI is pretty intelligent as well, and seems to be able to learn your patterns with time. The trouble is the AI controlling your teammates, which lacks either the brains to do the right thing or the sense to just stay out of the way. For example, on defense, they'll frequently stand still while a ball-handler runs right past; that kind of thing becomes a sadly crippling fault

VS

Grade
B
1-4Rating
EVERYONE

Developer

Left Field

Publisher

Nintendo

NBA COURTSIDE 2

Speaking of solid B titles, NBA Courtside shows conspicuous room for improvement, but it's still a good game and probably the best basketball game for the N64. The interface and control are improved, it's speedier than the last game to bear Kobe Bryant's name, and the graphics are undoubtedly excellent. Once Left Field (who are definitely improving; watch for their Excitebike 64) works through a few obstacles, Courtside will be a fine franchise.

Grade
C+
1-4Rating
RP**NBA JAM 2000**

Developer

Iguana West

Publisher

Acclaim



Confusing games are the NBA Jams of the present day. The original Jam's gameplay has been passed on to Midway's NBA Showtime, and meanwhile the Jam name remains in the hands of Acclaim, appended to hybrids of arcade and classic basketball. Jam 2000 features proper five-on-five games, but holds onto vestiges of its arcade roots, like an array of fantastical dunks. The result feels like it should have picked one route and stuck to it.



QUARTERBACK CLUB 2KGrade
C-
1-4Rating
E
ESRB

Developer

Iguana

Publisher

Acclaim

Incredibly, this game manages to look even better than last year's visual feast. But although it looks beautiful, it doesn't play like a great game of video football should. The control and lack of animation are the principal suspects, but the interface is also tough to manage. QC2K fails to deliver an authentic feel or stir long-term excitement during season play. Even when going at it with a human opponent, the learning curve for adjustment to the stuttering movements is steep, meaning some plays don't come off well at all. Quarterback Club entertains initially, but wears badly after continued exposure.

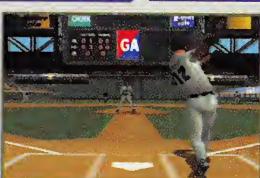
**TRIPLE PLAY 2000**Grade
C
1-4Rating
E
ESRB

Developer

Electronic Arts

Publisher

Electronic Arts



Triple Play 2000 doesn't improve enough from last year's average outing. The visuals are realistic, and the multitude of camera angles makes for a TV-broadcast feel, but the game that's so superbly presented fails to satisfy. Many of 1999's problems, like slowdown and incomplete animations, carry over, and the difficulty doesn't realistically ramp up in the season mode. EA has half the formula together, with a great look and interface, but they need to spend the next year perfecting and tuning the gameplay.

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WCW MACHETEGrade
C
1-4Rating
T
ESRB

Developer

EA

Publisher

EA

Hoping to broaden their domination of sports gaming to include "sports entertainment," EA has grabbed the WCW license to flex their muscles inside the squared circle. The control and response are pretty good for the company's first wrestling effort, but the graphics look oddly lackluster. Considering that previous WCW titles featured strong evolutions in both graphics and control, it seems that the license has taken one step back, instead of the hoped-for great leap forward.

**WWF WRESTLEMANIA 2000**Grade
B+
10+Rating
RP
ESRB

Developer

THQ

Publisher

THQ



When we get a wrestling game in from THQ, the odds are pretty good that you'll find us huddled around a television cheering and heckling one another for the better part of the day. For the first time, THQ brings Asmik's great grappling system to the WWF arena, and the results are stellar. The atmosphere created in this game is second to none. Great use of camera cuts help recreate what you might see during an actual broadcast, and the play mechanics only enhance the realism of a simulated match.

WWF ATTITUDEGrade
B-
1-4Rating
T
ESRB

Developer

Iguana West

Publisher

Acclaim

In their far-well endeavor with the WWF license, Acclaim is signing off with an "Oh, hell yeah!" The atmosphere it creates is out of control. It's obvious that Iguana's aim has been to create photo-realistic wrestlers, perhaps to the game's overall detriment. If they had toned down the polygon count, the frame rate could have been bumped up to keep the action running smooth. This game is all about The Attitude, though. A vast store of voice samples and all the wrestlers' individual theme songs are a huge draw.



0991725-0019AU/ Nintendo 64 all soft '99



NINTENDO 64

Review Pending

Rating



Developer

Electronic Arts

CYBER TIGER

EA's addition to the Hot Shots/Mario superdeformed golf genre should be well received, and not just thanks to the hot Tiger Woods endorsement. The control is solid and inventive, allowing anyone with an interest to pick up their clubs and send one straight up the fairway. CyberTiger's licenses also give it an edge over the competition. The courses will be patterned after real-life counterparts, and the game will star several PGA golfers, albeit in slightly cartoony form.



FIFA 2000

Rating



Developer

EA Canada

Publisher

Electronic Arts



The FIFA franchise has definitely shown that it can deliver, once the proper balance is struck between arcade and simulation gameplay. Heck, we saw it nail one right between the posts on the 3DO years ago. For the coming year, it looks like EA is concentrating on control and AI, without letting the game's looks become the number one priority. All-new motion-captured animations help the players look and move naturally, though. At this pace of improvement, EA will have a shot at fielding the best soccer title on the N64, which would further solidify their strong sports heritage.

VS

ML SOCCER

Rating



Developer

Konami

Publisher

Konami

When we first looked over Konami's '99 lineup, we were disappointed at the lack of an ISS game. As we moved down the list, though, we discovered Major League Soccer. Some quick research revealed that cosmetic alterations aside, MLS is ISS. The most recognizable improvements are the new animations, which look great while leaving the slick controls undisturbed. The action still moves at a respectable pace, and the camera never loses the side steps or chip shots. This game stirs excitement in both players and spectators.



NASCAR 2000

Rating



Developer

Electronic Arts

Publisher

Electronic Arts



NASCAR is undergoing quite a boom of late, threatening to break out of its traditionally large but static niche. Even those who resist the sport can appreciate the solid engine and look of this game, though. There's a lot of realistic strategy related to drafting and high/low cuts, techniques you'll have to master to lead the pack and be first past the checkered flag. The interface is very friendly, allowing casual users to drive a few laps and move on, while just as easily enabling the hardcore to trick out their car and race through the entire season.



23,040 Pixel (Early)
25,600 Pixel (Late)

0991725-0019AU/ Nintendo 64 all soft '99
S890623 (Late)

NBA LIVE 2000

Developer

EA

Publisher

EA

Rating



EA Sports has never stood for fielding a game that looks less impressive than the competition, and Live 2000 is no exception. Each of the players looks distinctly different in size, build and appearance, and the lion's share of the animations look great, although there are a few muddled bits during dunking and dribbling. No matter, really; that doesn't affect the tried-and-true gameplay, and Live will feature the simulation depth that EA has built its reputation on, even on a slightly cramped-for-space N64 cart.

0991725-0019AU

NBA SHOWTIME

Developer

Midway

Publisher

Midway

NBA Showtime has become a favorite among arcade goers. Some things are timeless, and NBA Jam's freewheeling gameplay is definitely one of them. The Dreamcast version of Showtime may wind up at the top of the graphical heap, but the N64 should host a game that looks almost as good and plays every bit as well. After all, earlier ports from Midway's 3DFX arcade hardware have looked great on Nintendo's system; remember NFL Blitz and Gauntlet Legends. Now that Blitz isn't quite as new and cool as it used to be, a four-player game of Showtime should be just what the doctor ordered when some friends come over.



BASS MASTERS 2000

Developer

THQ

Publisher

THQ



Licensed by the catchily-named Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (get the joke?), Bassmasters 2000 allows you to set out upon the competitive fishing circuit and pit your angling skills against the (artificially) wily largemouth bass. A variety of lures will be available to aid you in the virtual tackle shop. Bassmasters will support the N64 Expansion Pak, which means the graphics should be exceptionally sharp; round out your peripherals shopping trip with an N64 reel controller and you'll have the necessary ingredients for a fine fishing experience.



nintendogames

CLASSIC GAMES

In the wake of so many superior first-party Nintendo games, many a 64 gamer has likely overlooked these stunning achievements on the console. These aren't the obvious home-run-out-of-the-park classics, but rather those that perhaps eluded you for one reason or another. Any of these four games will keep you glued for days...

SPACE STATION SILICON VALLEY

Rating



Developer DMA Design

Publisher

Take 2 Interactive

Do androids dream of electric sheep? In any case, you are sure to do that after playing this game. Space Station Silicon Valley is a must-have. It's as simple as that. The game is as perfect a combination of platforming, puzzle-solving, and robot animal possessing as you will ever find in a video game, or real life, for that matter. As the computer chip Evo, it is your mission to "kill" and take over dozens of animals to get through the numerous levels and terrain types of the monstrous space station. Filled to the brim with delightful blend of laugh-out-loud humor, secrets, fantastic music, and maddening puzzles, SSSV deserves to be in the Hall of Fame.



BODY HARVEST

Rating



Developer DMA Design

Publisher

Midway



Body Harvest is a gem of a game. It's a somewhat unknown title, but one of the first games announced by Nintendo for the N64 back in 1996. Designed in conjunction with DMA (eventually picked-up and released by Midway in 1998), the game looks like it was a role model for future N64 games, as it combines a unique story with engaging music and a variety of gameplay styles - even flavors of an RPG. BH is a deep, engrossing experience. In a time when games are all flash and no substance, this sci-fi, third-person shooter is a must-buy for N64 owners. In a way, it kind of makes one think about Samus Aran and what she'd be like on N64.

MISCHIEF MAKERS

Rating



Developer Treasure

Publisher

Nintendo



In Treasure's glorious 2D masterpiece, Yuke Yuke Troublemakers – known in these parts as Mischief Makers – you take control of Intergalactic Cybot-G Marina Liteyears on a mission to save her master (the curiously promiscuous Professor Theo) from the clutches of the faceless Clancers. Set amongst a lush side-scrolling environment, littered with 3D elements, MM is packed with jumping and timing stunts that beckon hard-core platformers like a fish to water. Coupled with a truly weird tale, lunatic character designs, and a wonderful and whimsical soundtrack, it's about as far from the mainstream as one can get. And bravo to that. It's the only game of its kind for the Nintendo 64. If you don't have it, get it. MM also features some of the most epic boss encounters that you will ever experience.

MYSTICAL NINJA

Rating



Developer Konami

Publisher

Konami



Before developers really figured out the Nintendo 64, and way before the Ram Pak surfaced, Konami's Legend of the Mystical Ninja 64 wowed us like no other 3D adventure outside of the RARE and Nintendo stable. You could see far and wide, with little to no fog, amongst nicely detailed and textured environments. The music was also a breakthrough, as were the detailed character models. The frame rate chugged now and again, but otherwise it was way ahead of its time. For action RPG fans, the game has stood the test of time, and holds up today as one of the most captivating games of its kind for the system. We highly recommend this and the sequel Goemon's Great Adventure.



CGB Plane 0001110101 (layer 3)

CGB Plane 0100110101 (layer 2)

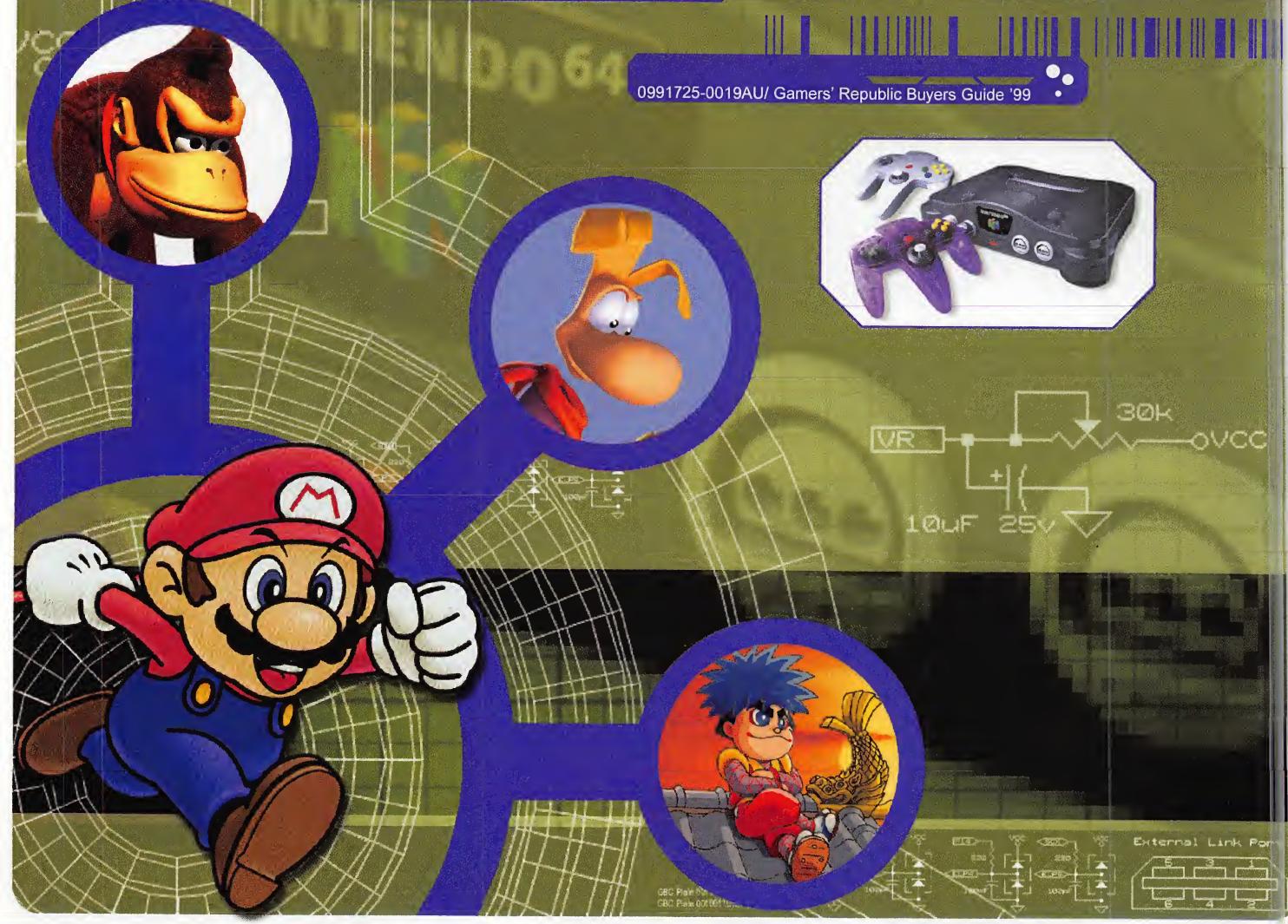
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12	Beetle Adventure Racing	A-
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	Mario Party	B+
	Monaco GP	B-
	New Tetris	B

18	Quake 2	B
	Rocket	B
	Shadowgate	B-
	Shadow Man	B+
19	Snowboard Kids 2	B-
	South Park	B
	Starcraft	B
	Star Wars Episode I Racer	B+
20	Tonic Trouble	B+
	Vigilante 8	B+
	Winback 64	B+
	World Driver	B-
21	Army Men	C
	Charlie Blast	C
	Destruction Derby 64	C
	FF 64	D+
	Hot Wheels	C+
22	Hybrid Heaven	C
	Last Legion	C+
	Monster Truck Madness	C
	Rat Attack	C
	Rampage 2	C-
23	Road Rash 64	C
	Starshot	C
	Twisted Edge Snowboarding	C-
	Wipeout 64	C+
24-27	N64 RPs	
28	All-Star Baseball 2000	B-
	All Star Tennis	C-
	Bass Hunter	B
	Blitz 2000	C
	Griffey Baseball 2	C-
29	NBA In the Zone 99	B-
	Knockout Kings	C-
	Madden NFL 2000	C+
	NBA Courtside 2 Kobe Bryant	B
	NBA Jam 2000	C+
30	Quarterback Club 2000	C-
	Triple Play 2000	C-
	WCW Mayhem	C-
	WWF 2000	B+
	WWF Attitude	B-

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playstation

CPU
R3000A
32 bit RISC processor
Clock - 33.8688MHz
Operating Performance - 30 MIPS
Instruction Cache - 4 KB
Data Cache - 1 KB
BUS - 132 MB/sec.

CD-ROM
Data Transfer Rate - DMA to RAM
150 KB/sec. 1x
300 KB/sec. 2x
Maximum Capacity - 660 Megabytes
Features-
Audio CD Play
XA Interactive Audio

Geometry Engine - GTE
Operating performance - 66 MIPS
3D polygon transformation -
Flat shaded - 1.5 M
Gouraud, textured/light sourced 500 K

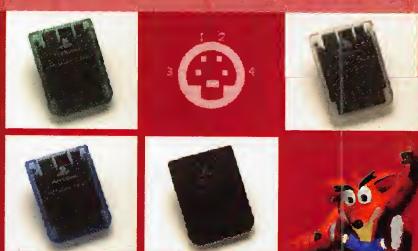
Data Decompression Engine - MDEC
Operating performance - 80 MIPS

Hardware Rendered Polygons - GPU
360K polygons/sec.

Memory
Main RAM - 2 Megabytes
Video RAM - 1 Megabyte
Sound RAM - 512 Kilobytes
CD ROM buffer - 32 Kilobytes
OS ROM - 512 Kilobytes

Sound Processor
24 Channels
44.1KHz sample rate
PCM audio source
Digital effects -
Envelope
Looping
Digital Reverb
Midi support

Sprite Effects
Rotation
Scaling up/down
Warping
Transparency
Fading
Priority
Vertical/Horizontal line scroll







PLAYSTATION

A TITLES

APE ESCAPE

Developer

SCEI

Publisher

SCEA

Sony's Ape Escape now defines the term "play mechanics." Through the use of "gadgets," the game constantly evolves, mixing platforming, puzzle elements, the first-ever capturing system (there's a whole lotta firsts in this game) and a plethora of game-

play elements. Ape Escape provides the player with a fresh perspective throughout the entire game - and what a game it is. Although the theme may seem somewhat nonsensical, once you begin rounding up the slippery little chimps and interacting with the game's main characters, it seems almost brilliant in its execution. The first game to fully utilize Sony's Dual shock technology (you can't play it without one), Ape Escape boasts an evolving control scheme complete with training courses for each new gadget you obtain, and constant guidance from your teammates at mission HQ. One of '99's biggest surprises, we hope to see a PS2 sequel on this one by 2001.



PlayStation

PlayStation all soft '99

CRASH TEAM RACING

Developer

Naughty Dog

Publisher

SCEA

Grade**A**

1-4

Rating

EVERYONE

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB



If its only aspirations were to be a good Mario Kart clone, Crash Team Racing would be delightful fun. But this kart racing game finds a unique edge with its inventive powersliding turbo system. Easy to pick up but difficult to master, Crash Team Racing will have you in its grasp for weeks. As a single-player game, the deft AI and involving Adventure mode give the game great playability, and when a friend enters the picture, the battle mode charges Crash Team Racing with new life. Drawing from the bright personality of the Crash universe, the game is a treat to look at as much as play: this is arguably the finest engine on PlayStation. Crash Team Racing is in a league all its own.



0991725-0019AU/ PlayStation all soft '99



IT KNOWS YOU LIKE RUNNING OFF-TACKLE ON THIRD AND SHORT

Sega Dreamcast

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IT'S THINKING

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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB



SEGA
NFL 2K

DINO CRISIS

Dino Crisis is so unremittingly and delightfully intense that your heart will race more times than you can count. The dinosaur confrontations are utterly convincing: they crash through glass windows, batter down doors, and jump out of



Developer Capcom Publisher Capcom

ventilation gratings. When you least expect it, your back is up against the wall, and a giant T-rex is thrashing its screen-sized head in your direction.

This game is thrilling. Credit part of this to one of the best-looking real-time engines on the PlayStation. A cold visual texture makes everything atmospheric and more effective, drawing you into the chilling gray of the laboratory, and an active camera deftly frames the scenes to provide greater impact. A brooding musical score intensifies during confrontation, boiling the tension of the moment. The highlight list is endless, forged by a group of game designers that are masters of their craft.

Grade

A

1

Rating

MATURE
M
CERTIFIED RATED BY
ESRB



PlayStation



PlayStation



all soft '99

FINAL FANTASY VIII

Developer Square Publisher Square

Grade

A

1

Rating

TEEN
T
CERTIFIED RATED BY
ESRB

Publisher Square

Between a Sinister World of Shadow
And a Dangerous Dimension of Fantasy
Lies a Twisted Battle for Reality

SILHOUETTE MIRAGE™



SPAZ
Twitch Games
Nothing Else!™

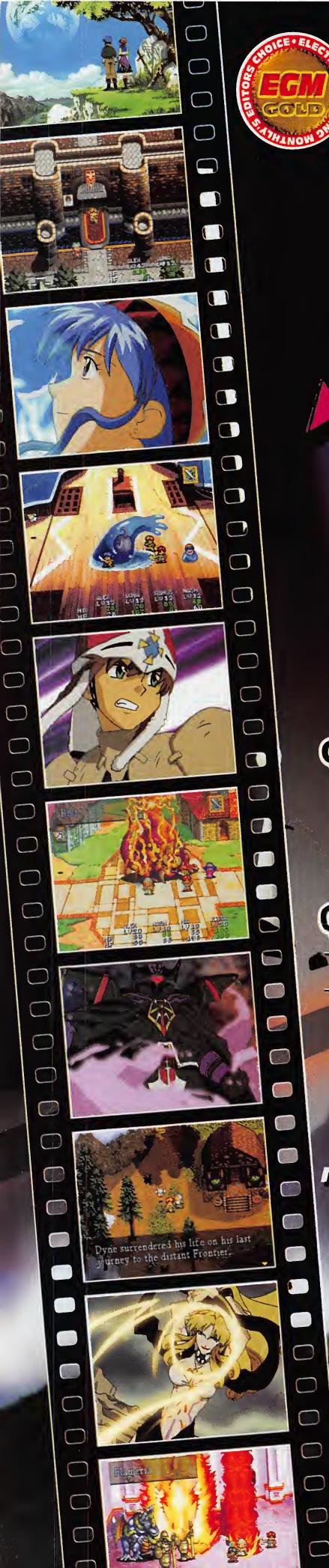


RP
Rating Pending
For more information or to report inappropriate material, contact ESRB
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB



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"...one of this year's



LUNAR

SILVER STAR STORY
COMPLETE

"...a must buy for RPGers!"

—EGM

"...wonderfully illustrated in a pure anime style."

—PSM

"...a huge epic quest..."

—Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine

"...a godsend."

—Gamers' Republic



must-play RPGs." — EGM



An Epic Adventure
A Timeless Romance
An Instant Classic



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Including an Exclusive Excerpt
from the Official Hintbook!*

★ *Full-color Cloth Map!*



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GRANDIR

Developer GameArts Publisher

ESP

7



Brought to us by GameArts, Grandia is quite possibly their greatest offering yet. Packed with beautiful graphics, a moving quest, and enchanting music, Grandia serves as both an incredible experience for fans of this genre and as an important reminder that RPGs don't necessarily need an hour of FMV to be extraordinary. Grandia doesn't have any world-destroying space demons, no surprise deaths of major characters, no time traveling, and no ancient prophecy that a boy will save his land from the ultimate evil. In fact, this game has none of the aspects we've come to expect from major RPGs. It harks back to when games didn't have to play out like Hollywood movies to be memorable.

Grandia is one of those rare games that concentrates more on delivering a fun experience rather than a purely beautiful one, and folks weaned on the visually intense 32-bit Final Fantasy games might walk away a bit disappointed.



Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver

Developer Crystal Dynamics

Publisher

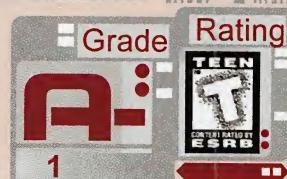
Fido

With gameplay that conjures memories of the original Tomb Raider and Link's Awakening, Soul Reaver draws the player into a vast, dark world laced with wicked puzzles and massive exploration. Raziel himself is a joy to behold. The patter of his wide, flat feet mingles perfectly with his light, nimble feel. He reacts precisely, animates beautifully, and is colored master-



fully. Watching him ascend, gliding spirally, is enchanting.

One of the most spectacular feats has you reconstructing the pipes of a gigantic cathedral, redirecting the air flow so that Raziel can ride their pillow-y thrusts to a lofty summit. Think back to the feeling you got in TR when Lara first entered a vast chamber full of possibilities and imagine this as the evil version, only taken to the extreme. There's another main element in SR (one which makes us particularly happy) and that's platforming, and lots of it. Raziel's gliding ability coupled with a flawless camera make for intense, nail-biting aerial antics, adding an air of skill to the meticulous gameplay.



PlayStation
all soft '99

1725-0019AU/ PlayStation all soft '99



LUNAR SILVER STAR STORY

Developer GameArts Publisher Working Design

Strategic inventory management, healing, spell casting, and technique are all required to overcome this epic-sized role playing adventure. Not since FF III have we been so challenged in the boss fighting arena. Battles aside, Lunar is to hand-drawn RPGs what Castlevania SOTN was to hand-drawn 2D. The reworked visuals are



exceptional, with animated backgrounds and detailed architecture in and around every city and town, not to mention the hours of gorgeous cinemas. Working Designs did a fine job translating the game's non-linear speech as well, helping SSS unfold in dramatic fashion (save a few worthy one-liners should you stray and seek out the game's massive populace). SSS not only lives up to the hype in terms of quantity, but in terms of quality as well. It also sets a new benchmark in packaging with a cloth map and hardcover manual, a making-of CD, and a soundtrack included! A must-own old-school RPG.

Grade
A-
Rating
TEEN
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PlayStation
all soft '99

725-0019AU/ Gamers' Republic Buyers Guide '99

R-TYPE DELTA

Developer Irem Publisher Irem

Grade
A-
Rating
EVERYONE
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

1-2



Irem's R-Type Delta shows no signs of teething pains as the series boldly enters the polygonal world with stunning results. The game's powerful combination of accomplished imagery and supremely enjoyable gameplay make for the best 32-bit shooter experience we've had since Treasure's brilliant, over-head Radiant Silvergun. And while Delta doesn't quite reach the stratospheric heights of that particular game, it easily trounces G-Darius and even Square's great Einhand in the world of 2.5D PS side-scrolling shooters.

Part of the game's brilliance is that even with all the modern trim-

nings, it still feels like R-Type. There's the same rock-hard difficulty and highly pattern-oriented shooting action that has always been the series' calling card. It's not so much a fast bullet dodger, but rather a methodical and deliberate style of game that rewards on many different levels.

We can't recommend R-Type Delta more highly to shooter fans. It looks fantastic and plays even better. In short, the best R-Type ever.



0991725-0019AU/ Gamers' Republic Buyers Guide '99

RESIDENT EVIL 3

Developer Capcom

Publisher Capcom

Grade A-

Rating



1



Surround yourself in the realm of the macabre with Resident Evil 3, Capcom's triumphant continuation of its horror classic success. One of the best games of the year, it is a penetrating experience that feeds off mood as much as gameplay. Taking place right around the same time frame of Resident Evil 2, the game actually has you revisiting the Raccoon police station, and most of the events unfold in the surrounding town. The gloomy, crumbling city through which you explore is strikingly presented, creating a compelling, unsettling atmosphere. Much of Resident Evil 3 follows the template of the first

two games, amplifying the stronger points to complete the game as the best in the series.



RIDGE RACER 4

Developer Namco

Publisher Namco

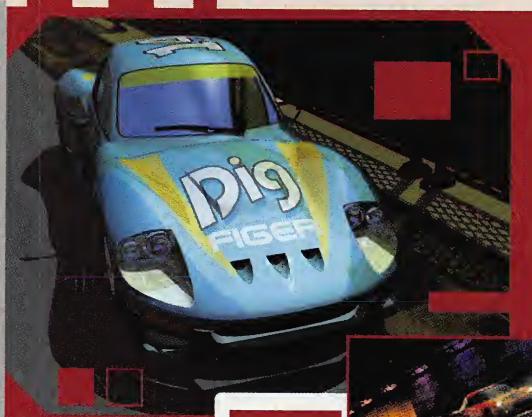
Namco

Rating

A-
1-2


When Namco set out to do something, they do it right. Witness Ridge Racer Type 4. In addition to creating a brilliant new racing controller, the JogCon, Namco has also blessed this game with absolutely hardware-busting graphics, an unwavering commitment to exciting game-

play, and attention to detail. Always evident throughout the Ridge Racer series has been Namco's supreme skill in designing courses that are not only beautiful, but also thrilling to race on, and R4 continues this tradition with style. Trackside detail is incredible, whether you're sweeping around corners through a city or flicking your car through S-bends in the countryside. You can see seemingly forever, and there are frighteningly realistic lighting effects everywhere. In addition, you get a great two-player split-screen (which will accommodate four players with a serial link), a car decal editor, a challenging one-on-one trial, over 300 cars to open up, stunning replays, and, of course, fantastic Namco music.



PlayStation

all soft '99



SILENT HILL

Developer

Konami

Publisher

Konami

Silent Hill is a great atmospheric achievement, a dreadful vision of one man's nightmare as he loses his daughter to the shadows of an abandoned town. Images of uncommon strength underscore the overwhelming darkness, evoking a rising current of tension that washes over us through to the gripping climax.



In realizing a fully polygonal environment, the game's designers have cleverly mastered a real-time engine and used its limitations to their advantage. An oppressive layer of fog and darkness loom over the town, holding back the field of vision, which strengthens the unsettling mood and enhances the gameplay. Shifting between two planes of reality, the dilapidated town often slips into a twisted state of ruin, punctuated by blood-soaked walls and floors. As much as it's about gameplay, it's just as much about what you see. Its visuals are a triumph in boldness of spirit and imagination. There's an overwhelming sense that the designers were able to realize their vision of horror with little compromise.



Rating

PlayStation
all soft '99

SILHOUETTE MIRAGE

Developer

Treasure

Publisher

Working Designs

Grade



Rating



A hand-drawn 2D experience that is as unique as it is spectacular to see and play. Silhouette Mirage for the PS is amazingly religious to the Sega Saturn original (which never made its way from Japan to America), missing only a layer of parallax here and there, and includes a bonus boss the Saturn version never saw. If you're mad about old-school 2D platforming, you'll be in heaven with SM's ingenious gameplay and unforgettable cast of characters, while newcomers may find out why we've all been here for so long. This is 2D at its finest, a game recipe that is sadly fading into the past.



An event for the platform-starved the world over, we'd take the game in a paper bag, but alas, the packaging is sweet, too. We don't get much these days. In fact we rarely get anything, so revel in Silhouette Mirage; it is not only one of the last of its kind, but one of the best as well.



SPYRO 2

Developer Insomniac

Publisher SCEA

Grade A-

Rating E



Compared to the original, Insomniac has gone above and beyond the call of duty, adding a hoard of new techniques and tasks to accomplish. You'll ride mine carts, spit rocks from a first-person view, fly through caverns, and slide on a frozen pond for a game of hockey. And some levels require backtracking as Spyro learns new abilities. The platforming isn't quite as intense as the first game, but Spyro 2 offers much more variety, and is definitely a step forward for the series. If this game engine has a rival on PS, it would be the equally impressive Crash Team Racing. You'll be amazed at what Insomniac has accomplished with this fantastic game.



PlayStation

THOUSAND ARMS

Developer Red Company

Publisher Atlus

Grade A-

Rating T



Thousand Arms fuses anime-style, hand drawn art with some of the best polygonal structure the PS has ever seen. It's hard to say exactly which part of Thousand Arms is best, but for anime fans, the dialogue scenes will certainly rank at the top. Professional voice acting adds significantly to the entire experience. The way pivotal events transition from game into anime is fantastic - by far the best form of in-game communication we've come across. Red, makers of Bonk, have created perhaps the years most engaging RPG and Atlus have localized it skillfully with one of the year's best packages. With Thousand Arms, you get more than just a game, you get the TA universe.

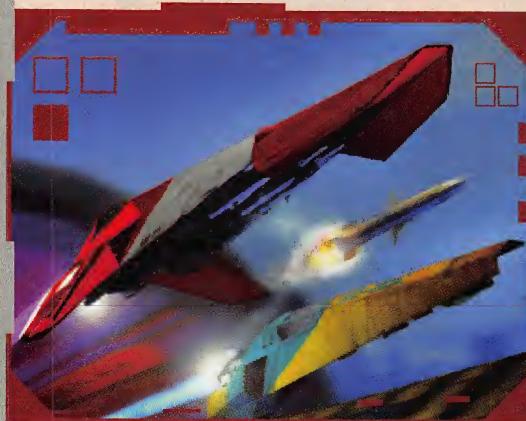
**SON****WIPEOUT 3**

Developer Psygnosis

Publisher Psygnosis

Grade A-

Rating RP



Wipeout 3 is the most thrilling and challenging entry since the original. Running in high-res mode, it has a solid and detailed look that's miles ahead of XL. Clipping is virtually nonexistent, and the speeds reached in this game are positively mind-numbing. W3's challenge lies in its highly technical circuits, and learning to drive cleanly and quickly enough to win is a daunting challenge. For beginners, the linear nature of the speed increases throughout the classes and the number of entertaining and diverting challenge modes ensures a fairly steady and manageable learning curve. And with an all-new, two-player split screen mode, this is a must-buy for Wipeout fans.



PlayStation



PLAYSTATION

8 TITLES



Developer

Namco

Publisher

Namco

Namco are absolute masters of presentation, and Ace Combat 3 benefits from this collective talent immensely. From the superbly designed interface to the oodles of on-going storyline elements, AC3 surrounds its missions with a level of craftsmanship that is all too rare. Some of the game's levels feature shocking amounts of ground detail and draw distances for the PlayStation, and as they accomplished in R4, brilliant sensations of atmosphere and times of day. AC3 also boasts a varied fleet of user-selectable craft, with a decidedly more futuristic slant than in previous games. Die-hard Ace Combat fans

may be let down a bit by this new game's lack of difficulty, but it's a supremely polished and playable title nonetheless.



Ace Combat 3

BLAST RADIUS



Developer: Pitbull Syndicate

Publisher: Psygnosis

Those who found Colony Wars a bit too involved might want to check out Blast Radius, Psygnosis' arcade-style deep-space shoot-



er. Built around the Colony Wars engine, BR has a similar visual feel, and going its predecessor one better, two-player modes are included, though they require a PS link cable.

Gameplay-wise, you'll find a competent 3D shooter here. Each level throws many targets at you; and there's no denying the inherent fun in blasting enemies in a vacuum. Everything is in place with Blast Radius, but it's still a bit dry. The game goes through its motions with aplomb, but it never grabs hold of you. Colony Wars is a tougher, but much fuller experience.

BLOODY ROAR 2



Developer: Fighting/Raizing

Publisher: Hudson Soft

The 3-D fighting game Bloody Roar 2 follows the somewhat "old school" precept of combo mania within a context of 2D gameplay, and BR2 does this well-established style of gameplay proud. BR2 plays very well and fans of the original game will love the enhancements, like faster response, better collision, and an improved combo timing system. Although not the most revolutionary fighter on the market, BR2 offers great graphics (backgrounds especially), decent tunes, spot-on controls, and excellent options. BR2 is recommended for Tekken fans due to its similar range of moves. The added bonus of

beast transformation is a definite plus. It's not a free-roamer like Ehrgeiz and Destrega, but BR2 is solid and very playable.



BOOMBOTS



Developer: Neverhood

Publisher: South Peak Interactive

Yet another memorable video game/clay media cinematic extravaganza from the Neverhood. Combining their skills using both clay and poly-

gons, BoomBots takes arena fighting to engaging new heights. The game sports an unusual (to say the least) cast of characters. Inspired by all walks of man, machine and everything in between, they range from robot dogs to wacky tanks and bugs, morphed into expressive mechanical gladiators. What you'll find instantly meritorious about BoomBots are the hilarious claymation cut scenes, which feature outrageous situation comedy. What'll keep you coming back is the unique arena-based fighting, which is grounded in equal parts strategy and hilarity.



CHOCODO RACING

Developer

Squaresoft

Publisher

Square/EA

Grade

B-
1-2Rating
EVERYONE
E

Chocobo Racing doesn't have anything on Crash Team Racing, but it's still a fun kart racer in its own right. The weapons system is ver-



satile, and allows you to select a specific ability for your racer, to be used in conjunction with the power-ups littered throughout each course. These range from the super-cheap Mega Flare, which sends everyone spinning out of control, to speed boosts and item stealing. The power-up system is nice in that you can also increase the ability of your items by collecting more than one. The two-player mode is pretty good, with just a bit of slow down on certain courses when the screen is filled, but the intensity and graphics of CTR are just not here.

0991725-0019AU

CROC 2

Developer

Argonaut

Publisher

Fox Interactive

Grade

B
1Rating
EVERYONE
E

Croc 2 is improved in many ways over the first game, which, for its time, was pretty good. The engine this time out is even more impressive with nary a hint of Z-buffering woes or clipping (fade-in is used very convincingly), and the camera, though not perfect, is much more user friendly. Croc himself also controls better with a tighter turning radius and more moves. The gameplay is comprised of many different elements, steadily increasing in difficulty as the game moves along. From puzzles to races and timing challenges, it's all here in terms of play mechanics. There are even mini-games like rafting and hang gliding in Croc 2,

although we found these less than stellar in execution.



DRIVER

Developer

Reflections

Publisher

GT Interactive

Grade

B+
1Rating
T

All PS racing fans should play Driver. Up to now, no other driving game has so fully captured the movie-style cop chase. With vehic-



ular gameplay thoughts of V8, Carmageddon, and the Twisted Metal games, Driver offers an element of gameplay that each one of these games possesses, complimented by its own unique strength: vast, intelligent level design. The massive urban environments provide the perfect playground to showcase intricate interaction, raw, wheel-to-wheel combat, incredibly flexible driving action, gorgeous physics and satisfying variety. The cars offer satisfying control, the graphics are good, and the traffic and cop AI is very impressive. Driver is an essential purchase for PS driving game fans.

B-
1Rating
T

ECHO NIGHT

Developer

From Software

Publisher

Agetec

Buoyed by a rich atmosphere and soundtrack, From Software's immersive adventure game Echo Night succeeds at creating a compelling game environment in spite of a fairly rough-looking engine and stiff control. The time-travelling storyline keeps things interesting, visually and conceptually, and although the game's pace is slow, you're not likely to get bored. But it's the sound design in Echo Night that really stands out and keeps this game from being just average. The high-quality sound effects and creepy background noises conspire to create an aural tapestry of the highest quality. Echo Night is not for everyone, but those with a penchant for slow adventure games and a tolerance for less than cutting edge graphics should be able to get into this one.



EHREGEIZ

Grade
B
1-2

Rating

Developer Dream Factory

Publisher Square/EA

No.1. One of the great, unsung fighters on PS was Toba! For whatever reason, it flew right over the heads of American gamers, and its vastly improved sequel was never released here. With Ehrgeiz, developer Dream Factory will get a chance to expose their singular take on the 3D fighter to a larger audience.

Ehrgeiz's gameplay differs in fundamental ways from Toba. Stages now have multiple elevations, characters have unlockable specials, and you can bound off of walls and other objects to attack. For a 60 FPS PS fighter, Ehrgeiz looks good, albeit a bit pale in comparison to the



arcade original. Throw in cool mini games and a deep quest mode, and there's plenty here to recommend.

**FINAL FANTASY ANTHOLOGIES**

Grade
B
1

Rating

Developer Squaresoft

Publisher Square/EA

There is still an extraordinary richness to Final Fantasy VI that refuses to be stifled by the shadow of modern game design, and playing this classic



is a rewarding experience in any era. Final Fantasy V, the other title in the Anthology, is a bit of a struggle, though, with dated visuals and a heavy emphasis on combat over story.

Other than a touch of load time, this collection faithfully presents these RPGs as they appeared on the SNES, and striking CG sequences have been added that warrant undivided attention. With a music CD rounding out the package, the Anthology belongs in any RPG aficionado's collection.

GEX 3: DEEP COVER GECKO

Grade
B
1

Rating

Developer Crystal Dynamics

Publisher Eidos Interactive

The free-roaming action genre of late is both brimming with quality and susceptible to an eminent lack of innovation. Crystal Dynamics have adopted a number of unique features to set their latest, Gex 3, apart from the past gems and also-rans.

The levels in Gex 3 are the star attraction. Often, designers simplify the platform elements essential to games like this. Crystal haven't dumbed it down; there are genuinely hard jumps in Gex 3. While our hero's limited array of quips wears a little, his vast repertoire of moves keeps gameplay fresh. Graphical feats like massive pirate ship of



Cut Throat Cove also fixate your attention, although the Anime Channel remains the local favorite.

GUARDIAN CRUSADE

Grade
B
1

Rating

Developer Tamsoft

Publisher Activision

From seaside villages that farm Fur Fish to a mysterious religious cult located deep in the mountainous regions, you meet a truly



odd cross section of humanity as Guardian Crusades engaging story unfolds. And par for the course from Tamsoft, the music fits the onscreen action well, creating an overall definitive aura of role-playing goodness. A bit on the short side (20-25 hours), you can play a lot longer if you explore once you learn to either fly with Baby or acquire the water bug. And this is one RPG that is definitely replayable, due to all of the hidden elements. A simple RPG, The Pocket Monster theme is timely and kids will love the discovery aspects of the game.

0991725-001AU

JADE COCOON

Developer

Genki

Publisher

Crave

Grade

B-

1

Rating

This monster creation RPG features great character design by Katsuya Kondo (Kiki's Delivery Service) and a great Studio Ghibli



anime intro, but the rest of the game isn't quite as special. Visually, Jade Cocoon isn't the sort of game that bowls you over with its technical prowess. The nicely shaded and enveloped character models are the best looking things in the game, but the mostly handsome pre-rendered backgrounds that you move around in are a far cry from the work of Square. The music is very strong, however, setting an appealingly serene mood, sometimes mixing Indian percussion with ethereal voices. Jade Cocoon is enjoyable in long stretches, and the desire to create a powerful team of monsters with which to battle is addictive.

0991725-0019AU

METAL GEAR SOLID VR MISSIONS

Developer

Konami

Publisher

Konami

Grade

B-

1

Rating

Well, it's not really a new Metal Gear game, but VR Missions provides plenty of MGS-style action. There are literally hundreds of challenges here, from basic weapons trials to tricky puzzle-based stages. Some of the missions are supremely addictive, and trying to earn a first-place score during time trial can become an almost unhealthy pursuit. Also, getting to play as the ninja in some levels (with requisite cloaking) will be an undeniable thrill for MGS fans. But with so many missions, the game tends to wear out its welcome somewhat, especially because there's no



real structure to it. Still, hardcore MGS fans will probably find something to like in VR Missions.

NECTARIS

Developer

Hudson Soft

Publisher

Jaleco

Grade

B-

1-2

Rating

Just about anyone who owned the TurboGrafx or PC Engine played Military Madness. The simple strategy and melancholy tone was instant-



and infuriatingly addictive. Now, a number of years on and with the likes of C&C lurking about, Military Madness finds a home on the PS as Nectaris. Featuring all new polygonal battle scenes and a slew of new maps, it's surprising how well the game has held up. And that's a good thing, because Nectaris' play is basically the same as it was on the Turbo. With maps from the original game, brand new selections, winning entries submitted in a contest in Japan, and even a scenario editor, old-school Military Madness mavens will be in heaven.

by accessible

OMEGA BOOST

Developer

Polyphony

Publisher

SCEA

Grade

B+

1

Rating

Developed by Polyphony Digital, the makers of the unbelievable racing game Gran Turismo, Omega Boost dutifully fulfills its three primary responsibilities as a shooter: to look good, control well, and give you lots to shoot at. We're not claiming that Omega Boost is better overall than Panzer Dragoon II - surely one of the best 3D shooters of all time - but it's a more kinetic, engaging experience. Unfortunately, like many shooters, Omega Boost is too short and too easy, making it good for a quick fix between larger games, and not too much else. But that takes nothing away from its addictiveness, quality of play and excellent graphics. It's



a beautiful, hollow thrill, and that's all a good shooter needs to be.



Developer

Namco

Publisher

Namco

PAC-MAN WORLD

Included as part of this 3D PlayStation platformer is the original arcade Pac-Man, whose classic gameplay still holds up extremely well. Indeed, it's almost more fun to play than Pac-Man World. A number of worthy ideas run through Pac-Man World - especially in the boss encounters, the game's strongest suit - but for some reason there seems to be limp production values and awkward 3D perspectives in the game. Pac-Man World should be sought out by Pac-Man fans of all ages and genders, but after what seems

to have been close to three years in development, avid game enthusiasts will expect more from the game.



QUAKE 2

Developer

Hammerhead

Publisher

Activision



The first-person shooter to end all first-person shooters has made its way to the PlayStation surprisingly intact. Of course, the graph-



ics aren't quite on a Voodoo3 level, but they look great for the hardware it's on. The frame rate is always solid, the control is excellent, and the four-player support is a treat. This isn't a straight port of the PC version, though. A few new levels have been added, and the others have been redesigned, both to conform

to the limitations of the PlayStation and provide a new experience to veteran players. If you mastered the PC version, this game probably isn't for you, but newcomers are going to love it. The weapons should be familiar; they've all made the cut, including, of course, the railgun.

ROLL AWAY

Developer

Game Design

Publisher

Psygnosis



Roll Away is set up in a hugely original fashion. Navigating elaborate networks of rotating blocks and rectangles fixed in a 3D space, you take control of a beach ball that is confined to forward motion along any side of the current path. A sharp sense of visual acuity is imperative to keep a lock on the perspective of surrounding blocks of track, which are often separated and manipulated in such a way that requires drops and jumps from one point to the next. The confusion you will first experience is intense, but once you begin to break the boundaries of two-dimensional thinking (that's what did

Khan in, remember?), grabbing scattered keys and locating the exit becomes a driving addiction.



ROLL CAGE

Developer

ATD

Publisher

Psygnosis



Roll Cage is a mad, futuristic combat racing title that has you driving your vehicle on ceilings and walls, as you unleash a bevy of flashy

racing on ceilings and walls sounds highly intriguing and one that must have been difficult to implement. But the developers at ATD have done admirably in keeping what could have been a completely out-of-control experience playable. With that said, it's a little too easy to get completely crossed up and the fear of losing control makes the gameplay tense at times, and not necessarily in an enjoyable way. Apart from this anomaly, Roll Cage is a fast and frenetic combat racer. It's richly colored, has a strong two-player mode, fantastic weapons, and an impressive soundtrack.



weapons of the colorful and lens-flare variety. At first thought, the concept of

0991725-0019AU

STAR WARS PHANTOM MENACE

Developer Big Ape/Lucas Arts Publisher Lucas Arts

Of all the merchandise spun-off from the *Phantom Menace*, this game has to be one of the best to hit the market. Not based on just



a 15-minute sequence within the film, but rather a chronicle of events from beginning to end, the *Phantom Menace* strings a comfortable balance in action and puzzle solving. With the rich atmosphere fostered in each area, it is easy to spend a few hours playing the game exploring the local surroundings, only to look up at the clock and wonder where the time went. The difficulty level is high, but not to the point of frustration, so fans of all ages can appreciate what the game has to offer. Now you can relive the *Star Wars: Episode One: The Phantom Menace* for yourself.

Grade **B-**
1-2
Rating TEEN

0991725-0019AU

SOUTH PARK

Developer Appaloosa Int.

Publisher Acclaim

Grade **B**
1-2
Rating MATURE

A game more at home on the N64, the PS game isn't our version of choice, but it'll suffice for fans who refuse to plug in a cartridge. Iguana is to be commended for respecting the authority of one of the best things to hit cable TV and the cinema in the last decade. *South Park* actually came out just before Christmas '98 and we know the entire team worked insane hours from the outset to make that date. We thank them (enough to squeeze it into the '99 guide), as they definitely made last Christmas a little sweeter. Plus, where else can you heave urine soaked snowballs at mutated turkeys and alien scum?



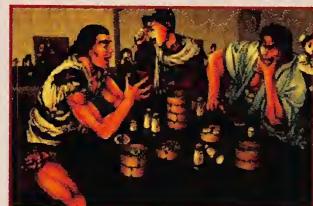
SUIKODEN 2

Developer Konami

Publisher Konami

Grade **B+**
1
Rating T

There's so much about *Suikoden II* that is deeply appealing. Earthy colors create a perfect medieval tone, as does the expressive charac-



ter artwork. Battles are brisk, waged with an unusually large party of six. The musical score plays with unique styles, sometimes layered with vocals. It stays true to the original, embodying many of the same qualities that made it a favorite of

PlayStation RPG fans. *Suikoden II*'s creators have ensured 30 hours of adventure - much more than the original *Suikoden* - but that ends up bogging the game down: some scenes seem protracted. Fortunately, there is so much to like about *Suikoden II* - especially the addictive quest to find all 108 characters - that the down times are easy to look past.

SYPHON FILTER

Developer Eidos

Publisher 989 Studios

Grade **B+**
1
Rating T

Though somewhat hampered by harsh graphical glitches, *Syphon Filter*, an amalgam of just about every action genre, is an exhilarating game of espionage, action, suspense and intrigue. One cannot help but see the game's inspirations immediately: elements of *Metal Gear Solid*, *Tomb Raider*, and *GoldenEye* are all thrown into the mix. But the game still manages to be a somewhat original, enjoyable action adventure. SF's missions are extremely diverse, precise and often require a wide array of tactical and strategic maneuvers. It's hard to ignore SF's abrasive graphical shortcomings, but all is forgiven with the high degree of interactivity within the environments. Overall, SF provides a challenging, very playable, engrossing experience that, while not visually or aurally magnificent, takes course through a believable, interactive world.





0991725-0019AU/ PlayStation all soft '99

Grade
B
1

Rating

Developer Dreamworks Int.

Publisher Activision

Tibetan chants and mystic rhythms help set the stage for this thoroughly entertaining multi-genre hybrid. Dreamworks makes the most of each and every inch of the lush polygonal landscapes, saturating them with vivid color and beautiful lighting. Tai-Fu's gameplay is comprised of a fairly unique blend of fighting, exploring, and platforming, punctuated by real-time cinematics. Each area is populated by the clan of its origin, and so T'ai constantly finds himself in new situations. Tai unleashes an assortment of beautiful and very effective special attacks. An ancient, Chinese, honor-and-respect theme comes across extremely well, with a hint

T'AI FU

of comic relief and an overall aura of camaraderie and poetic justice. Besides haphazard jump alignments and collision, it's all good in *Tai Fu*.

**TARZAN**

Developer Eurocom

Publisher 989 Studios

Grade
B-
1

Rating

One of the most visually exciting games on PlayStation, Tarzan does a remarkable job of capturing the look and tone of the film.



The game is awash in gorgeous artwork. Everything is vivid and alive: waterfalls spill over ledges, superbly animated animals run in and out of the trees, and colorful birds are everywhere. Tarzan's gameplay is classic platforming, but the control is unresponsive. It is very frustrating early on, and only with a lot of anticipation and guessing can you begin to compensate for the crippling time it takes to toss fruit and make jumps. There are other problems as well—cheap hits and short levels top the list—but the game still packs many positives.

TAIL CONCERTO

Developer Bandai

Publisher Atlus

Grade
B-
1

Rating

Had this game been released a year ago, around the time of the original import release, it would have fared a bit better. Unfortunately, it hasn't aged that well, but still has a lot of charm and appeal for the very short duration of the experience. This is a really cute game, and you'll love the expression of the little cats that you scoop up into your mechanized suit, though as per usual, the extensive English dub is somewhat lacking. *Tail Concerto* is unique and inhabits an inter-

esting world, and fans of *Rockman Legends* should enjoy this, even though it's a much shorter and simpler experience.



0991725-0019AU/ Gamers' Republic Buyers Guide '99

UM JAMMER LAMMY

Grade

B

Rating



Sony describes Um Jammer Lammy, the sequel to their infectious rhythm game Parappa the Rappa, as "fun-filled and upbeat." Per-



haps "frightfully bizarre" would be better. The object is for Lammy (a humanoid lamb with a guitar) to match the rhythm of a song by timing button combinations. These songs contain lyrics like "I'm still wondering when I die, I hope I'll get to eat, I hope I'll cry." Typical dialogue from Parappa's story, unlocked when you finish Lammy's: "This is called the yummy-yummy beef stage. Do you like?" "I think it needs to be a little more girl-like." "Like life-sized beef?" Um Jammer Lammy is challenging, outrageous, and boasts extras like a 2-player game. The only thing missing is Parappa's singular originality.

0991725-0019AU

Grade

B

Rating



A richly satisfying sequel, VH2 is everything the original was and more. The mechanics of the game follow the basics of VH1, but a much more complex items and weapons system cranks up the strategic element. Weapons and armor must be fitted according to class, and a skills system allows for the interchanging of powers that level up during battle. New to the series is a unique turn-based system, in which the computer opponent has the opportunity to move simultaneously with your ally placement, forcing you to anticipate enemy strategy in a chess-like manner. A complex story, written with intelligence and sophistication, makes the long stretches of dialogue entertaining. When it's time for battle, the intense and

VANDAL HEARTS 2

Developer Konami

Publisher Konami

involving combat, great artwork and amazing spells keep VH2's energy level on a continual high.

**SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT****XENA**

Grade

C+

Rating



Like the show, Xena is heavily based on action, and controlling Xena is a snap. She's nimble, responsive, and nicely animated, yet the camera



does require some getting used to. Should Xena find herself facing away from the action, you'll need to swing the camera around manually or click it into place using the right analog. After extended play, however, you'll be able to sense the enemy's position, and strike before they appear onscreen. Xena's coolest attack is her Chakran attack. While the free-look button is being held, Xena can launch it and the camera will follow. Taking out an archer 100 yards away is a satisfying experience. A few additional tweaks could have made this game a contender.



PLAYSTATION: IT

C/LOWER

Grade

C+

1-2



ARMY MEN: AIR ATTACK

As its name implies, Army Men: Air Attack is another game pitting the green army against the tan army, but this time from airborne choppers. The game gives players the ability to not only use firearms, but to use a grappling hook to grab and move objects. The premise of this game is promising, but nothing memorable came from it.

Developer

3DO

Publisher

3DO



Grade

C-

1



BUGS BUNNY LOST IN TIME

This is a clunker of a game, scraped together from the spare parts of better games. The result is awkward and sloppy, powered by the lifeless heart of the Jersey Devil engine. It's full of durable play mechanics, but despite hints of invention it's forever caught in a dull rut, failing to develop its stronger ideas into anything memorable.

Developer

Behaviour Ent.

Publisher

Infogrames



Grade

C-

1-2



DEMOLITION RACER

Demolition Racer is meant to be easy to pick up and play, and this is its first wrong turn. The cars employ very basic physics routines, handling with no sense of realism. A few minor adjustments to the gameplay would have helped immensely. The dull, muted color scheme of the cars look like they were painted on the screen, ensuring the game's mediocrity.

Developer

Pitbull Syndicate

Publisher

Infogrames



Grade

C

1-2



FATAL FURY WILD AMBITION

Wild Ambition is SNK's first polygonal outing on the PlayStation, and there is obviously much to be forgiven and learned. The control isn't bad, but the 3D models are poorly constructed, the sound samples seem very off, and generally the game doesn't compare to its competition, which includes some of the finest 3D fighters ever made.

Developer

SNK

Publisher

SNK



Grade

C+

1-2

**HOT WHEELS TURBO RACING**

Hot Wheels Turbo Racing for PlayStation is nearly identical to the N64 version. It doesn't look as clean, but features better music. The game showcases quite a few classic hot wheel cars, but its most unique aspect is the inertia-based racing. Tricks and stunts are also thrown into the mix.

Developer

Stormfront

Publisher

Electronic Arts



Grade

RP+

1

**KINGSLEY'S ADVENTURE**

Kingsley the Fox and his compatriot True Knight do battle with Bad Custard to save the Fruit Kingdom. After the poor showing Rascal had, we thought we had seen the last of this engine, but lo and behold, Psygnosis is giving it another turn. Aimed at a younger demographic, the game will have the same type of adventure/platform gameplay, but in a much finer tuned environment.

Developer

Psygnosis

Publisher

Psygnosis



Grade

C

1

**LEGEND OF LEGAIA**

Only when battle ensues in Legend of Legaia do things begin to get interesting. Characters use brutal hand-to-hand combinations initiated by a sequence of moves on the directional pad. But after engaging the enemy nearly every step of the way and sitting through a fair share of loading time, even patient gamers will question the game's entertainment value.

Developer

Contrail

Publisher

SCEA



Grade

D-

1-2

**JET MOTO 3**

The racing in this game is so haphazard that a tracking arrow was implemented to show the way. Your hoverbike is chaotically unstable; the lack of control means you'll spend as much time crashing as looking on at the horrible visuals. One wonders which is worse: the game itself, or the opening cinema, with its shameless product placement.

Developer

Pacific Coast P&L

Publisher

989 Studios



Grade

C+

1

**KONAMI ARCADE CLASSICS**

This one is hard to recommend if you're not a nostalgia freak. Names like Gyruss, Super Cobra, and Yie Ar Kung Fu loomed large ten or fifteen years ago; now they're a distant memory. If you remember down-the-drain blasting accompanied by some lovely digitized Bach, though, ignore that grade over there and relive your lost youth.

Developer

Konami

Publisher

Konami



Grade

C+

1-2

**MONACO GP 2**

With Monaco GP 2, Ubi Soft has released an improved version of their Monaco GP line. The game sports several different gameplay modes, an improved physics model and better graphics - including 16 impressively rendered tracks. But there are a lot of other F1 racing games available that offer quite a bit more than MGP2.

Developer

Ubi Soft

Publisher

Ubi Soft



0991725-0019AU/ Gamers' Republic Buyers Guide '99

MONKEY HERO

Monkey Hero is an action RPG that makes the great Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time seem like a transcendental experience by comparison. And if the terribly inane story doesn't send you immediately fleeing, the stunted game play and anemic visuals are more than willing to drag you into the abyss.

Developer Blam! Publisher Take 2 Interactive



Grade D

1 Rating

EVERYONE ESRB

RC CHAMP MOTOCROSS

RC is an average all-around MX racer. Although plagued with bad body English, the bikes handle great otherwise, reacting realistically to the terrain, and it certainly poses a great challenge. We also found the music way out of place. RC isn't a bad game, it's just that there's better MX games out there these days.

Developer FunCom Publisher THQ



Grade C+

1-2 Rating

EVERYONE ESRB

RUSHDOWN

EA Canada represents three extreme sports, arcade-style, in Rushdown: mountain biking, snowboarding, and kayaking. The mountain biking is pretty lame and exhibits some really questionable character animation and physics. The snowboarding is limited by simplistic controls. As for the kayaking...it's kind of twitchy. Bottom line: there's bigger and better competition on the PS.

Developer Canal+ Multimedia Publisher Electronic Arts



Grade D+

1-2 Rating

EVERYONE ESRB

RAT ATTACK

Rat Attack has an arcade feel to it, and might be considered fun for those who can get past the somewhat childish theme of superhero cats catching rats. Although it combines a mix of action and puzzle games spread through a dozens of levels, this title may be a little too obscure for some gamers.

Developer Pure Entertainment Publisher Mindscape



Grade C-

1-2 Rating

EVERYONE ESRB

RISING ZAN

This game is so rough around the edges, and yet it somehow carries a strange appeal that may keep you playing. For starters, Zan has just about every move you could ask for in a 3D action/adventure. Too bad the execution is so sloppy, otherwise the hopeful gameplay mechanics would be a total saving grace.

Developer UEP Systems Publisher Agetec



Grade C+

Rating

MATURE M ESRB

SHADOW MADNESS

Shadow Madness should be a book to read rather than a game to play - there's a great story here. The contrast between the pre-rendered and the polygonal is overwhelming: SM's fights and polygonal elements are just ugly. If it's story that you find key, look no further, but if you desire graphic prowess to match, have a look elsewhere.

Developer Craveyard Publisher Crave Ent.



Grade C+

1 Rating

TEEN T ESRB

Grade

C+

1

Rating

EVERYONE

E

STAR OCEAN

Star Ocean is a game about stunted characters, wandering an empty wasteland of tired formulas. It might work with a reasonable level of creativity, and there are occasional bursts of energy, but inane circumstances cast shadows over the game's primary tasks and fatiguing side quests. Dull characters drag the graphics into ho-hum territory, despite moments of visual flair.

Developer

Tri-Ace

Publisher

SCEA



Grade

C

1-2

Rating

EVERYONE

E

TEST DRIVE OFF ROAD 3

TDOR3 has lengthy courses and nearly 30 licensed vehicles, but it's too much of a struggle. The frame rate leaves something to be desired, and keeping your vehicle on track takes care - it seems at odds with its rough-and-tumble presentation. Some may appreciate this challenge and the fair level of replay value, but most will find it simply tedious.

Developer

Accolade

Publisher

Infogrames



Grade

C

1-2

Rating

EVERYONE

E

TRICK'N'SNOWBOARDER

Unfortunately for Capcom and their Trick'N Snowboarder game, all games in the snowboarding genre are going to be compared to the brilliant game 1080 Snowboarding. TNS does have some trademark Capcom flair, a variety of tracks and an enjoyable two-player game. But if you're looking for the ultimate snowboarding game, get 1080.

Developer

Capcom

Publisher

Capcom



Grade

C-

1

Rating

EVERYONE

E

SPACE INVADERS

If you didn't grow up with Space Invaders and can't squeeze some nostalgic fuzziness out of playing it again, don't bother with this polygon-enhanced update. That is unless you have some morbid curiosity about the beginnings of gameplay in the modern game era.

Developer

Z-Axis Ltd.

Publisher

Activision



Grade

C-

1

Rating

EVERYONE

E

TINY TANK

Tiny Tank seems even more average than before its frame rate was refined. A few of the seek-and-destroy missions are enjoyable and creatively conceived, but often the dull level designs pinch the gameplay down to laborious tasks. And Tiny's limited repertoire of out-of-date pop-cultural quips will probably make you head to the options screen in search of the volume control.

Developer

And Now LLC

Publisher

SCEA



Grade

D+

1

Rating

EVERYONE

E

UPRISING X

Uprising X is a bland looking (albeit smooth) 3D shooter with minor strategy thrown in for good measure. To be honest, the game offers very little in the way of diversity. Between unoriginal escort missions and typical destroy-the-generator objectives, some may have difficulty seeing this one all the way through.

Developer

Cyclone Studios

Publisher

3DO





Review Pending



PLAYSTATION

ALIEN RESURRECTION

Get ready for some face-huggin', chest-burstin' action when you become Ripley and try to save humanity from those nasty aliens. Fox Interactive has included a superb engine and sound effects straight from the movie, which are sure to move the game along smoothly.

Developer Argonaut

Publisher Fox Interactive



BROKEN SWORD 2

A port of the original PC version, this graphical adventure adds to the small handful of games that can take advantage of the PlayStation mouse. There are some really nice graphics here, but it looks like there's going to be some disappointing gameplay.

Developer Revolution

Publisher Crave

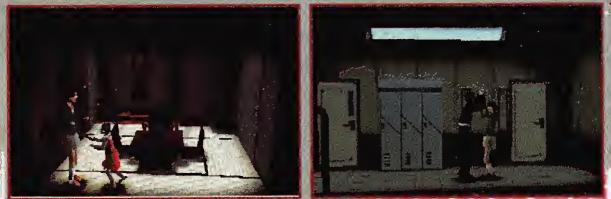


CLOKETOWER 2

Ascii's creepy real-time point and click horror adventure game is getting a sequel. Clock Tower 2 will feature more monsters and a storyline and gameplay system based around the concept of controlling a character with split personalities; each personality will have different abilities. Stay tuned.

Developer Human Ent.

Publisher ASCII Ent.



Take Taito's Bust a Move and swirl the spheres around a central shooting mechanism and you have Mitchell System's Ballistic (formerly Time Loop). Simple and addictive, as any good puzzler should be, Ballistic also features multiple one and two player modes.

Developer Mitchell

Publisher Infogrames



CRTDOG

The bizarre Nickelodeon cartoon character with two heads and one posterior makes the leap from TV to Playstation in search of the Golden Hydrant, complete with voices from the show. This one is clearly aimed at the kiddies.



Developer Hasbro Int.

Publisher Hasbro Int.



CRUSADERS OF MIGHT AND MAGIC

Crusaders of Might & Magic is not just another RPG. In fact, it's not an RPG at all, but a 3D action game with role-playing elements. We look forward to spending more time with this game from a famous lineage.



Developer 3DO

Publisher 3DO



DESTRUCTION DERBY 3

The carnage continues in this self-explanatory title from Psygnosis, which features rooftop arenas and mindless destruction. It looks to top the previous installment with more cars, improved graphics, and extra playing modes.



Developer

Psygnosis

Publisher

Psygnosis

**DUKES OF HAZZARD**

At E3, people pointed and laughed, but Dukes of Hazzard is actually reasonably fun to drive, and a faithful re-creation of the television show. You'll swear you're eight years old again, as the voice of Waylon Jennings invites you back to a simpler time.

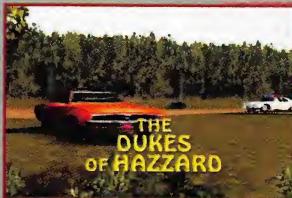


Developer

Sinister Games

Publisher

South Peak Int.

**FIGHTING FORCE 2**

The original Fighting Force was intended as a sort of 3D Streets of Rage, but it didn't quite work. Now, Eidos has gone for more of an action adventure, and it suits the game much better. Maybe this series will prove worthwhile after all.



Developer

Core

Publisher

Eidos

**DIE HARD TRILOGY 2**

Three separate engines, an original story, advanced AI, and a plethora of firearms power this sequel to the explosive original. Expect an even greater, more involved challenge than in the first one. Now, as for a better game overall...



Developer

N-space

Publisher

Fox Interactive

**DUNE 2000**

The game that spawned the real-time strategy genre is getting a facelift for the millennium, jumping from 2D to 3D, with a host of other gameplay improvements. RTS and Dune fans will most certainly be pleased.



Developer

Westwood Studios

Publisher

Westwood Studios

**MENT****FORMULA 1 '99**

Formula One '98 was a bit of a letdown. For this year's edition, Studio 33 step in for Visual Sciences and have created an all-new game. Benefiting from improvements in every area, most notably graphics, Formula One 99 will not disappoint F1 fanatics.



Developer

Studio 33

Publisher

Psygnosis





GAUNTLET LEGENDS

The Gauntlet Legends arcade game is a great game, and what makes this lineage so brilliant is that not only is the arcade-to-home conversion surprisingly faithful, it's even better with a group of friends. With great graphics and classic gameplay, this game delivers

Developer

Blam!

Publisher

Midway Games



CLOVER

The only platformer with a disembodied hand as the protagonist has been ported from the N64 to the PlayStation. Essentially the same game as its N64 brother, you...um, solve puzzles with the help of a ball in efforts to defeat the evil alter ego glove.

Developer

Interactive Std.

Publisher

Hasbro Int.



INTELLIVISION CLASSICS

Thirty games for thirty bucks and every one a favorite...fifteen years ago, that is. But seriously, some of these were pretty cool, like Astro Smash and Space Armada (reminds us of another classic...can't quite place it). Still, probably only for nostalgic value.

Developer

Activision

Publisher

Activision



CEKIDO

Fans of classic side-scrolling beat-'em-ups like Streets of Rage will rejoice at the seeming revival of the genre. Non-linear gameplay gives the ability to choose your own path, plus a four-player arena battle mode features both game characters and bosses.

Developer

Gremlin

Publisher

Interplay



GRAND THEFT AUTO 2

GTA's blood, profanity, and amoral themes will naturally carry over to the sequel - all the senator-offending qualities that gamers find interesting. Expect the same cool Spy Hunter gameplay and nonlinear quest, plus a whole new game world.

Developer

DMA Design

Publisher

Rockstar Games



JEREMY MCGRATH 2K

Mr. McGrath himself had a lot of input into the design of this game, from the design of the many tracks, to being motion captured, to voicing the tutorial. The track editor from the original also returns, and it's looking a lot better.

Developer

Acclaim

Publisher

Acclaim



JACKIE CHAN STUNTMASTER

Chan's unmistakable movements are captured uncannily in every punch, kick, and improbable jump seen in this game. The expansive 3D environments have multiple paths, giving the game a cool adventure feel, with a classic Final Fight foundation. The game is quite diverse and looks great; we're looking forward to this one.



Developer

Radical Ent.

Publisher

Midway

**LEGO RACERS**

The actual racing in Lego Racers is standard kart fare, and there may be better options if you want to pick a title in that genre. The graphics are sharp, though, and the theme tracks are a great nostalgia trip (ah, memories of Pirate Legos). The ability to design and build your own car (as you gather more and better bricks) is another great hook.



Developer

High Voltage Software

Publisher

Lego Media

**MEDAL OF HONOR**

This first-person shooter from EA and Dreamworks Interactive drops you behind German lines on the eve of D-Day, June 6, 1944, as an elite Special Forces agent, so that you can experience the fight against the Nazis in World War II firsthand. This is the video game Steven Spielberg has always wanted to make.



Developer

Dreamworks Std.

Publisher

Electronic Arts

**MENT****MESSIAH**

Body-swap your way to the salvation of the world as Bob the Cherub in Shiny's latest. The PlayStation version of Messiah might not have the PC's stunningly smooth graphics, but the ingenious puzzle-solving and deranged humor will surely carry over.



Developer

Shiny

Publisher

Interplay





0991725-0019AU/ PlayStation all soft '99

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Infogrames' big selling N64 title Mission:Impossible is coming to PS. This conversion will feature enhanced lighting effects, FMV cinemas, and all the missions from the N64 game. Compared to the first game, if this version is tightened up a bit, it could be worthwhile.

Developer X-ample

Publisher Infogrames

**OMIKRON**

Based on the soon-to-be-released PC game of the same name, Omikron features new David Bowie composed and performed songs. The former Ziggy Stardust also is a key character in this futuristic world that combines several gameplay styles. This is a cool one.

Developer Quantic Dream

Publisher Eidos

**RAINBOW SIX**

While not a bit-for-bit port of the highly acclaimed PC version, Rainbow Six for the PlayStation will offer a lot of new options for players, such as auto-targeting, extra missions, a more intuitive interface, and strengths and weaknesses for your team operatives.

Developer Rebellion

Publisher Red Storm Ent.

**MISSILE COMMAND**

The graphics received an update, but the gameplay is the same as the classic arcade version played in the 1980s. In addition to the facelift, Hasbro Interactive has included a brand-new 3D mode that has you shooting missiles into the distance. The retro spirit lives on...

Developer Hasbro Int.

Publisher

Hasbro Int.

**PONG**

After buying the rights to the entire Atari lineup, Hasbro wastes no time in pumping out a 3D version of the immortal Pong. The game needs little explanation: it's true to the spirit of the original Pong. We will soon see if the company respects the legendary games it now owns.

Developer Hasbro Int.

Publisher

Hasbro Int.

**READY2RUMBLE**

Like the N64 version, the PlayStation port of Ready 2 Rumble Boxing may suffer without Dreamcast graphics to mask the game's simple gameplay. If you want arcade boxing on your PS, though, you could do worse than this hollow title: does Contender ring a bell?

Developer Midway

Publisher

Midway



RUGRATS

Rugrats: Search For Reptar wasn't exactly a hit with the serious enthusiast crowd, but kids loved it, and the same should hold true for the sequel. The game will feature all the show's characters and voices, as well as its offbeat sense of humor.



Developer

n-Space

Publisher

THQ



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SABOTEUR

"Saboteur" is French for a person who commits sabotage, but the title character of this 3D action/adventure is evidently Japanese; go figure. He'll have an impressive array of well-designed game worlds to explore and well-animated attacks to execute, as well as an intelligent canine sidekick.

Rating



Developer

Tigon

Publisher

Eidos

**SHAO LIN**

The fighting characters in Shao Lin look like bad b-movie robots and we're not sure if this is a comical part of the game or not.

Based on real fighting styles, the game incorporates multiple enemies on screen and boasts a four-player simultaneous mode.



Developer

Polygram Magic of Jp.

Publisher

THQ

**SOUTH PARK RALLY**

Umm, it's a kart racer with South Park characters. Cartman will say "ass" a lot, Stan will puke a lot, and Kenny will experience more deaths than you've had hot dinners. If you like this sort of thing, grab your friends and go to it.



Developer

Tantalus

Publisher

Acclaim

**MENT****SUPERCROSS CIRCUIT**

Supercross Circuit is currently plagued with choppy graphics and the rider animations are somewhat robotic. The game's high speeds cause some control problems, but, on the plus side, it's filled with many options, such as clothing changes and create-a-track editor. Hopefully with the final version, the problems will have been addressed.

Rating



Developer

MBL Research

Publisher

Electronic Arts



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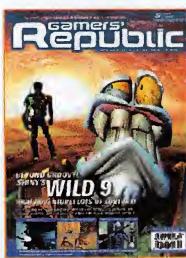
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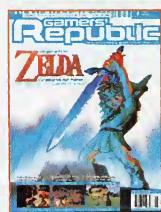


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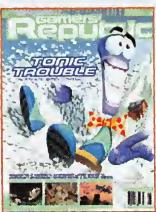
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SUPERCROSS 2000

Though Supercross 2000 still needs some minor control tweaks and physics adjustments, the game does a lot right that the other guys haven't figured out. EA has included a stellar replay mode packed with all manner of freeze frame, great music, and even tolerable announcers. This could be one of '99's best racers.



Developer Electronic Arts

Publisher Electronic Arts

**TEST DRIVE 6**

Try out a whopping roster of over 100 vehicles in Accolade's latest Test Drive. Pitbull Syndicate has already had two iterations to perfect their PlayStation development skills, so this one should play pretty well, even in a crowded racing market.



Developer Pitbull Syndicate

Publisher Accolade

**TOMB RAIDER 4**

The title has a note of finality to it, but it's probably just Lara's last PlayStation affair. Fittingly, it's quite good. Her Metal Gear-esque arsenal of weapons (popping skeleton heads with the sniper revolver is wonderful) and the huge, exploration-oriented environments will intrigue diehards and initiates alike.



Developer Core

Publisher Eidos



0991725-0019AU Gamers' Republic Buyers Guide '99

TEAM BUDDIES

Like Rampart or Bomberman, a four-player game of Team Buddies could consume hours. The Buddies are round, short-limbed color-coded whatsis who gather crates, which can be broken for power-ups or combined to build weapons, vehicles, and other means of destroying their Artificially Incompetent foes.



Developer Psygnosis

Publisher Psygnosis

**TOCA 2**

Touring car racing is an odd sport, at least to American eyes (Brits probably say the same thing about NASCAR, though), and as such the first TOCA racer didn't do well over here. With a new engine and U.S.-only tracks, as well as the original's solid racing physics, perhaps the sequel will be more palatable.



Developer Codemasters

Publisher Activision

**MENT****TOMORROW never dies**

With Tomorrow Never Dies, don't expect a GoldenEye rehash, as three different gameplay engines were created by Black Ops. They've finally managed to create a third-person action-adventure with great graphics, control, and camera. Expect plenty of gadgets, vehicles, and classic Bond action.



Developer Black Ops

Publisher Electronic Arts



TOY STORY 2

The movie is destined to be a hit, which means the game is going to do well too. Targeted for a more general demographic, Toy Story 2 has vivid, detailed 3D visuals joined with diverse objectives to keep the game moving. The environments are huge, playing host to a wealth of platforming and exploration gameplay.

Developer Traveller's Tale

Publisher Activision

**V-8 SECOND OFFENSE**

Many argued over the comparison between Rogue Trip and Twisted Metal 3; Vigilante 8, the real winner of the car-combat wars, lost a bit of its thunder. The sequel should stand alone, with the same great control, better graphics, and more weapons, cars, and arenas.

Developer Luxoflux

Publisher Activision

**WARRPATH JURASSIC PARK**

Thrill to the ferocious Mega Raptor and Gigantasaurs as these and twelve other dinosaurs battle in destructible arenas based on the Jurassic Park and Lost World films. If the names of these dinosaurs don't frighten you, the edible human power-ups will.

Developer Black Ops

Publisher Electronic Arts

**40 WINKS**

Within 40 Winks's infantile-looking exterior lies a pure-bred action/adventure, brimming with otherworldly mystique and a Nyquil-sized dose of diverse gameplay, including exploration, racing, shooting, and lots of platforming. Imaginative and nicely executed, it's a fantasy game that has fun for all ages written all over it.

Developer Eurocom

Publisher GT Interactive

**TWISTED METAL 4**

One feels a little leery of this one, considering the weak Twisted Metal 3. However, 989 promises better arenas and better physics (no flipping this time...we hope), along with the classic characters, so hopefully V8: Second Offense will have some credible competition.

Developer 989 Studios Publisher 989 Studios

**WILD WILD WEST**

This 3D action/adventure game features the main characters from the classic TV show (movie? what movie?) attempting to foil a would-be assassin. A dozen missions will include shootouts and puzzle-solving gameplay, as well as the edgy humor Jim West was once famous for.

Developer Realtime Associates Publisher South Peak Interactive

**WU-TANG**

Although a game based on some of the real-life controversy surrounding the Wu-Tang clan might be more interesting, Wu-Tang: Shao Lin Style is great nonetheless. Even after the novelty of Wu-Tang wears off, players will still find a solid, fun game to kick it with.

Developer Paradox Publisher Activision



Sony Computer Entertainment



PLAYSTATION: SPORTS PS

SPORTS PS

Grade

Rating



Developer

989 Studios

Publisher

989 Studios

3Xtreme

3Xtreme's relatively simple tracks emphasize tricks instead of one's ability to race through the course. Skateboarders, BMX bikers and in-line skaters all race against one another on the same courses. Unfortunately the frame rate is horrible and, more importantly, every trick ramp and railslide area is totally open to the three sport types, so there is no clear advantage to being a biker, boarder, or skater.



ALI'S LITTLE SOCCER

Grade

Rating



Developer

Z-Axis

Publisher

Take 2 Interactive



ALIS definitely deserves the boot. Okay, that might sound harsh, but with all the features this game boasts - especially the utilization of the PlayStation's hi-res graphics mode - the game should rival already existing software. The predictability of where the ball is being passed to is upsetting, as if the game is being played underwater. This frustration doubles when the character models pass straight through each other.

0991725-0019AU

ALL-STAR TENNIS 99

Grade

Rating



Developer

Smart Dog

Publisher

Ubi Soft

All-Star Tennis '99 lacks the creative and innovative traits other games in Ubi's library tout. If you approach the game as a no-frills empty arcade experience, you won't be disappointed. If you were hoping to re-create U.S. Open matches, you will need a healthy and active imagination. The game lacks any atmosphere and the absence of signature racket handling or celebrations from the licensed pro players is a shame.



ANIMANIACS 10 PIN ALLEY

Grade

Rating



Developer

ASC Games

Publisher

ASC Games



We are big fans of the original Ten Pin Alley, even with its steep learning curve. The great representation of ball and pin physics has never been depicted in a better format. With the Animaniacs attached, the game now provides the same quality with more user friendly and arcade-like mechanics. Add the charm of WB's modern-day cartoon characters and this becomes a party favorite.

CONTENDER

Grade

Rating



Developer

Sony

Publisher

Sony



For a boxing title, Contender is much too stiff. Boxers all sport the same physique and height and go through the same animation routines, showing little or no individual traits. So expect a lot of monotonous actions. Control is responsive and the strategy of bobbing-and-weaving is adequate for the arcade style gameplay. Because the fighters are unable to display personality, though, the excitement is average at best.

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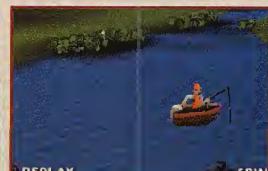
CYBER TIGERGrade
B-

Rating



Developer Electronic Arts Publisher Electronic Arts

Initially some will be turned off to the grade-school look of the characters, even though everything else looks and plays as it should. But thankfully, as you become more skilled, the character matures in appearance lending to the belief you're involved in a serious game of skins and not miniature golf. The standard three-click swing is present and for those of you with analog controllers, a very cool cock-and-snap swing is available.

**FISHERMAN'S BAIT**Grade
C-

Rating



Developer Konami Publisher Konami



Being an arcade port, one would think FB would have all the elements to enjoy a day out on the virtual lake. But the experience never evolves. Cut scenes are passable and the fish react convincingly, but the lack of visual flare above the water makes for little in the way of visceral pleasure. Add the lack of variety in fishing locales and only a handful of lures, and the product barely makes a rental worthwhile.

0991725-0019AU

MADDEN 2000Grade
C+

Rating



Developer RedZone Interactive Publisher 989 Studios

A lot has been lost since the sprite-based players of year one - most notably control - but that seems to have finally been fixed. Player models are smaller and the camera is pulled back, which allow the game to move without a hitch. But botchy collision detect, crowded play calling and unintelligent AI take away from enjoying a complete season. Every year we hope for realistic gameplay; instead, visuals take shotgun over AI.

**MADDEN 2000**Grade
C-

Rating



Developer Electronic Arts Publisher Electronic Arts



We're not sure what happened to this series. While the franchise has taken a step forward in control, AI has gone through unrecognizable changes. At this point, we aren't even worrying about the awkward-looking player models, as long as they move reasonably, which they do. But like every other football game for the PlayStation, creating new and flat-out ridiculous dance celebrations have become overly important to developers.

MARCH MADNESS '99Grade
C-

Rating



Developer Electronic Arts Publisher Electronic Arts



EA named their college basketball franchise after the sweeps that take place during March. We think it's an attempt to get the inebriated fan still drunk off the fervor of watching an actual game. What college b-ball fan wouldn't be attracted to a game named after the most exciting stretch of the basketball season? But everything here is so uninspired it will more than likely make a true fan upset.



MLB 2000

Developer

989 Sports

Publisher

989 Sports

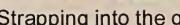
Grade

B+

Rating



MLB2K has a distinctly better feel than before, enhanced mechanics and more statistics - a given for any console sports game. 989 also improved the graphics engine and tweaked hitting and pitching controls, making the game more true to life. In addition to these improvements, 989 has added more variety in the gameplay modes. The Manager mode enables realistic simulation of a manager's many decisions during a game and throughout a season.



MTV SPORTS: SNOWBOARDING

Developer

Radical Ent.

Publisher

THQ

Strapping into the game is a breeze and coming to grips with the play mechanics are easy and almost second nature with familiar button commands. The whole format is very arcade-like and will attract casual and more skilled gamers with the same excitement. We fear the hardcore crowd will probably be turned off by the lack of control when completing rotations and watching the computer automatically land tricks.



NBA BASKETBALL 2000

Developer

Radical

Publisher

FOX Sports Int.

Grade

B-

Rating



NBA Basketball 2K enters the sports console market with great results. Looking for long-term acceptance and not a quick buck, the efforts pay off in spades. Presentation alone during the game is the truest depiction of a television broadcast. Add innovations like the "go-to" guy and a good number of player traits and animations, and FOX's approach and attitude shine brightly. We look forward to more from this camp.



NASCAR 2000

Developer

Stormfront Studios

Publisher

Electronic Arts

The game pushes a great-looking engine, but the majority of the tracks are remarkably small, keeping the frame rate locked at a nice smooth pace. Cars are modeled extremely well and display good physics. Lending to the races is some exciting and refined commentary, and pit crew communications help flush out the perfect line. To those who actually appreciate the sport, this is everything they could want.



NCAA CRIMEDREKER 2000

Developer

Redzone

Publisher

989 Studios

Grade

C+

Rating



Blue Chip Trading, which is destined to be a traditional feature of the series, really adds to the authenticity of the politics of college football by allowing you to choose your team and make trades before you begin a season. Animation is choppy and AI is loose during one-player games, but most who would invest in this title are looking for multi-player pigskin action. If you are in college and own a PlayStation, chances are you already own this one.

Grade

B

Rating

**NCAA FINAL FOUR**

Developer

Killergame

Publisher

989 Studios

NCAA Final Four 99 is a fast-moving, quick-playing game of b-ball. It has obvious issues every now and then, such as guarding animations that cause players to slip-slide across the floor, but the game feels nice and immersing most of the time. As a basketball game, NFF99 isn't nearly as intuitive as games like In the Zone, but as a college hoops game, it easily takes the crown on the PS.

**NHL BLADES OF STEEL**

Grade

D+

Rating



Developer

Konami

Publisher

Konami



Konami has yet to find a middle ground with their sports games. Blades of Steel '99 is one of those games that misses the mark entirely: graphics, control, AI and sound are all completely lackluster. To have fun playing this game alone would take lots of denial. What's worse is that the multiplayer game isn't any better. We all loved the original 8-bit game, and think (like Castlevania) maybe they should have stuck with the 2D formula.

0991725-0019AU

Grade

B-

Rating

**NHL CHAMPIONSHIP 2000**

Developer

Radical Ent.

Publisher

FOX Sports Int.

Fox Sports television has definitely contributed to the look and presentation of this game, providing the familiar characteristics from their sports broadcasts. The entire game is cut and directed like a television presentation. Great-sounding commentary streaming about and periodical updates and game tips pop up at the bottom of the screen. What's more important is that the game moves at a chilling speed - something lost after the days of 16-bit.

**NHL FACEOFF 2000**

Grade

B

Rating



Developer

989 Sports

Publisher

989 Sports



Hockey games have been taking a wrong turn lately, but NHL FaceOff 2000 is definitely a step back in the right direction. Control and response is tighter than ever and the pace is reminiscent of the days of sprites. Because gameplay was a priority, visuals aren't spectacular, especially when close up, and the AI routines, like group tactics, are sloppy. Still, on the PlayStation hockey won't get any better.

Grade

C

Rating

**SKATE AND DESTROY**

Developer

Z-Axis

Publisher

Rockstar



Skate and Destroy includes skateboarding locations from all over the globe. Choose a place, then work out your line until you feel fit to flaunt it in front of any would-be cop. Start the timer - you'll have two minutes - then hit all of your best tricks in hopes of racking up big points. Score the points then head for the exit before time runs out, and the man in blue runs in.

SLED STORM

Developer

EA Canada

Publisher

Electronic Arts

Grade
B+Rating
E
ESRB

A few years ago a snowmobile game may have seemed questionable, but now that the sport has become more prominent, EA has gone after the market. Nice physics have been implemented on each of the sleds, allowing players to feel the distinct terrains outfitted on the different tracks. This includes sliding across the ice or bogging down in the mud. Races are challenging and track design is varied, pushing you to fight for position.

Grade
B-Rating
EVERYONE
E
ESRB

Developer

Micro Cabin

STREETSK8TER

Street Sk8ter is a fast-paced skateboarding game that's sure to entice fans of the sport. The game is driven by arcade-style gameplay. Street Sk8ter's trick system is very accessible for beginners, although it could have been a bit deeper, like most skateboarding games. Thankfully Street Sk8ter's controls are dead-on, and there's quite a bit of replay value for skate rats and non-skate rats alike.

Publisher

Electronic Arts

Grade
A:Rating
T
TEEN
ESRB**TONY HAWK**

Developer

Neversoft

Publisher

Activision

In THPS, quick thinking influences the ability to pull off tricks. The game has brilliant control no other skateboarding game has offered before. Whether you are pulling half-pipe tricks or tooling your street skills, the camera doesn't miss a beat. Pro Skater offers a delicious frame rate even in two-player mode, which is actually just as fun as the one-player game. A must-have title for the PlayStation, no matter what your game preference.

Grade
BRating
EVERYONE
E
ESRB

Developer

989 Sports

Publisher

989 Sports

XTREME 2

989 has done an excellent job of taking the traditional game of football and fusing it with the distinct look and feel of arcade-style gameplay; conscious and methodical play strategies have taken a back seat. Unfortunately, single-player games can become a bit wearing, because the computer AI never evolves. The first game played during a season is going to feel the same as the Super Bowl. Overall, though, this is a solid purchase.

Grade
B-Rating
EVERYONE
E
ESRB**WWF ATTITUDE**

Developer

Iguana

Publisher

Acclaim

Just before giving up the WWF franchise, Acclaim leaves their mark with the best effort and execution yet. The animation is still a bit choppy, though the wrestlers move naturally and look great. The gameplay is realistic and formidable to the extent that newcomers may find it hard to master. If you have followed the previous incarnations of this wrestling franchise, you'll be more than satisfied with Acclaim's last effort on PlayStation.



PLAYSTATION: SPORTS RP

Rating



Developer

Idol Minds

COOL BOARDERS 4

Publisher

999 Studios

Idol Minds' second go with the Cool Boarders franchise has the benefit of their experience going for it. CB3 turned some off with its altered gameplay, and especially the out-of-place punch command; CB4 will keep that, but combat should be tweaked, and some of the new game modes sound intriguing, like the off-the-slopes bushwhacking mode. The graphics and trick system are already good-looking and friendly (respectively), so no worries there.



GALLOP RACER

Rating



Developer

Tecmo

Publisher

Tecmo



This is an oddball title, unless you happen to live in Japan, where horse-racing sims are ubiquitous. This is the genre's debut in the US; Tecmo seems to be developing a fondness for niche games like this. Well-promoted, Gallop Racer could do well; it features a simpler mode of play for casual fans and a deeper sim mode for the serious enthusiast. With so many sports games out there offering little in the way of innovation, it's good to see something new.

0991725-0019AU

KNOCKOUT KINGS 2000

Rating



Knockout Kings probably appears in the dictionary next to "boxing sim"; its recreation of the sweet science is detailed and realistic. That's a positive or a negative, depending on what you want from a boxing game. If a sim is what you're after, low on flash and heavy on control complexity, this is the way to go. In addition to active training, the PSX version will have twice as many boxers as the N64's. The graphics are weaker, but that may be a decent trade-off.



MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER 2000

Rating



Developer

Konami

Publisher

Konami



Other than a name change from International Superstar Soccer to Major League Soccer, everything in this soccer title is as good as ever, and in some cases, better. The visuals have been bumped up a notch, but there are no interruptions in the action, as play frenetically passes up and down the field. As always, great audio and sound effects help set the mood for international football delight, and you'll have tight control over your players every step of the way.

NBA SHOWTIME

Rating



Developer

Midway

Publisher

Midway



The Playstation version of Showtime might not move quite as smoothly as the arcade original, and the quality of the player models may suffer a little, but this is still great arcade basketball. Juking, dodging, passing, dunking, and shoving the opposition across the court are as easy to pull off as they were eight years ago, when we first discovered the "Altitude With An Attitude" that was NBA Jam. The sim hardcore can have NBA Live; the rest of us will be perfectly happy with Showtime.



0991725-0019AU/ Playstation all soft '99

NBA LIVE 2000

Developer Electronic Arts Publisher Electronic Arts

Rating



Accepted by the majority of sports enthusiasts as king of the PlayStation basketball court, NBA Live 2000 follows the series tradition of gradual, but reasonable expansion and improvement. New rosters, polished player models and slick-looking hardwoods help the cosmetic representation become more convincing. One-player seasons, as you take on the computer opposition over and over, are a bit arduous, but if some final AI schemes are buttoned up, NBA Live 2000 could be the elite of the series.

Rating

**WCW MAYHEM**

Developer Electronic Arts Publisher Electronic Arts

Rating



WCW Mayhem's mechanics differ from those in earlier WCW-licensed games, which may turn off those who follow only a license. The wrestlers also look a bit disjointed and oddly proportioned (except in the case of guys like Scott Steiner, who're supposed to look that way). Still, the only WCW-licensed games otherwise available on the PlayStation are THQ's lackluster Nitro and Thunder. Mayhem has better gameplay than those, and a fine catalog of wrestlers and atmosphere features. Hey, and you can turn Schiavone's voice off...

**WILD WATER**

Developer Ubi Soft Publisher Ubi Soft

Rating



Wild Water World Championship allows you to kayak through some of the best-looking rivers seen on the PlayStation. The amount of control you are given is quite surprising, unless you've paddled a kayak before and realize just how maneuverable the little craft are. You can shift your character's weight to tilt forward and backward, and use your paddle to turn by shifting sides or planting it in the water. All the game's mechanics are on track; if Ubi makes some minor tweaks before launch, like fixing a minor draw-in problem, they'll have a memorable, unusual sports game.

Rating

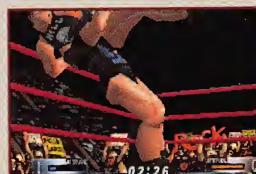
**WWF WRESTLEMANIA 2000**

Developer Asmik Publisher THQ

Rating



We're looking forward to watching this license grow to fresh and innovative levels with THQ. Wasting no time, they drop a Wrestlemania game in our laps in time for holiday season. It's a bit odd playing as WWF characters with the 'grapple' fight engine, but it is a welcome change. Watching the intro sequence while each wrestler walks out from the locker rooms stir laughs and excitement. The gameplay is tight, the action is great and one need not worry about straining fingers to perform moves. Button-mashing is less requisite this time around.





PLAYSTATION

CLASSIC GAMES

With so many quality PlayStation games available, many a PS owner have perhaps overlooked or never heard of these excellent games from the PS past and present. These aren't the obvious home-run-out-of-the-park classics, but rather those that perhaps eluded you for one reason or another. Each is worth owning, and the 2D stuff... superb.

Rating



Developer

Wheelhaus

Publisher

Psygnosis

Here's a game we've always wanted to see. The premise is similar to that of the tank maze game found in the respected arcade game, Tron. Only now, instead of a sprite-based top-down view, the game is in 3D and sets the camera following your tank. How cool is that? Even the levels in the game are dead-on to those found in Disney's sci-fi classic. Enemy AI gets increasingly smarter as you progress, and learning to bait one tank at a time will become mandatory in the later levels. Probably the most inviting feature, the two-player game, requires the under-rated link cable. These matches of seek and destroy can generate such tension and genuine emotion, you'll start to think you're Jeff Bridges in a fight for your life.



ASSAULT RIGS

CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT



Developer

KCET

Publisher

Konami

Rating



Castlevania: Symphony of the Night contains so many riches that it towers over ordinary games. Many of us view this masterpiece as one of the greatest games ever made, which is an honor not easily refuted; every single aspect of the game has been handled with soaring imagination and meticulous care. Castlevania is a series that is cherished by many ardent game players, and everything we love about the series has been elevated to a new plateau, from the overwhelmingly effective gothic style of its visuals to the soaring music to the terrifically involving gameplay. In essence a classic Castlevania adventure grafted to Metroid-like design and RPG trappings, this is gaming at its very finest.

0991725-0019AU

Rating



Developer

Insomniac

DISRUPTOR

Publisher

Universal

Before their talents spawned the wonderful Spyro the Dragon series, Insomniac took a crack at the familiar first-person-shooter genre with the under-appreciated Disruptor. Taking place over 13 futuristic levels set in various locales in outer space, the game was rich in sci-fi atmosphere, exhibiting a unique look that has yet to be matched in a PS FPS. Of course, the 3D engine looks a bit aged by today's standards, but Disruptor's excellent level design combined with an inventive Psionic weapons system, intense action and a dynamic musical score make it an extremely involving experience.



KLONOA

Developer

Namco

Publisher

Namco

Rating



Namco lovingly created this wonderful 2.5D, 60-fps action/platformer only to watch it fizzle in the States. Klonoa deserved so much more, and we hope some of you will seek out this near-classic and revel in its almost NIGHTS-like atmosphere, marvelous and magical CG sequences, and tight, addictive, 2.5D gameplay. Then there are the boss encounters: clever, beautiful bits of programming and design that push this game over the top. More than anything, Klonoa proves that a game need not be in 3D to be compelling in today's gaming scene. We must ask the question: Are there so many new gamers that the simple joy of a well-conceived side scroller is completely lost on them? That's unfortunate, for a game like Klonoa shows us what a mixing of the old and new can be, and confirms unquestionably that we are right to like it.

0991725-0019AU/ Gamers' Republic Buyers Guide '99

**LOADED**

Developer

Gremlin

Publisher

Interplay



When the PlayStation was in its infancy, Loaded screamed onto the scene with its testosterone-pumping action and scintillating lighting effects. Here was a game brilliant to look at and manic to play. Even today, its raw, gritty design holds up against the masses, and it becomes especially appealing, considering the lack of support for the category. The lacerating music—some of the best on the system—drives the energy level to critical, and commanding the freaky characters through the dark mazes, searching for enemies to explode into piles of bloody remains is a devilishly good time.

LOMAX

Rating



Developer

Psygnosis

Publisher

Psygnosis



As 2D platforming games move into extinction, a gem like The Adventures of Lomax becomes an even more important part of your collection. The game is, and always will be, a work of art, and its brand of classic mechanics combined with the beauty of its world make Lomax a game you can always pick up and play. In debt to the design style of Flink on Sega CD, Lomax transports you to a whimsical fantasy world, where colors are bright and vibrant, the music is cheery, and the scenery is brought to life by such wonderful touches as masses of delicate butterflies. The animations in the game are extraordinary; when you play Lomax, you can't help but lament the lost art of sprite-based games.

MEGA MAN 8

Developer

Capcom

Publisher

Capcom

Rating



Mega Man 8 has been accused of existing merely for gamers inside the Mega Man fandom circle, and this is exactly why we love it; it's everything that's classic about Mega Man, wrapped in a 32-bit package. The visual style and gameplay is Mega Man to the core, and with the power of the PlayStation, the game has become one of our favorites in the series. It is certainly a leap above Mega Man X4, and like all great 2D platformers, the game stands the test of time, with animation and scenery that will always radiate a wonderful charm. Games like this are timeless.

MOTOR TOON GP

Rating



Developer

Polys

Publisher

SCEA



Back when polygonal game environments were fresh and new, Motor Toon GP, from the people who would later bring us Gran Turismo, thoroughly captivated the racer in all of us. We could give a rat's backside about pop-up, as we marveled at the colorful 3D worlds before us, and the wacky cast of cars that bent and swayed with every twist and turn. Its gourd-shaded polys accented with beautiful lighting, and cool power ups like "big, bigger, biggest!" and "crazy mushroom!" made it the first racing game that really captured the essence of the PlayStation. For many - me included - it still does. Grab it before the system goes away.

Rating



RAYMAN

Developer

Ubi Soft

Publisher

Ubi Soft

2D platforming on the PlayStation has never been better than Rayman. Some may argue this, but the natural progression in play mechanics, peculiar humor, great level design and awesome score continue to impress even to this day. Characters within the world all lend their own personality and each level provides a unique approach to making you dial in the platforming skills. Unreachable areas become attainable through learning new abilities, then returning. Only then do you begin to realize just how grand the game is. If you don't own an N64 and Rayman, and don't have a copy of Rayman for the PS, do your self a favor and go and get it; you deserve to play this game in one form or another.



TOMBA

Developer

Whoopie Camp

Publisher

SCEA

Rating



0991725-0019AU

Tomba's marketing implied that it was mainly a 2D action/platformer, when it's so much more. Tomba is a game based on 100 sub-missions to acquire the necessary weapons, items and outfits to unlock the mystery and reclaim Tomba's sacred necklace. His exploits don't cover all that much real estate in terms of area, but Tomba's extremely fun and addictive to play. The game's inspired 3D locales and unique perspectives are to be commended. Tomba manipulates objects (and tosses lots of pigs) amongst two plains, moving into and out of the screen, and traverses isometric villages and sub levels in between. The beautiful Tomba 2 is just around the corner, so if you missed the original it's definitely time to make some bacon.

GHOST IN THE SHELL

Developer

Exact

Publisher

THQ



Based on the *Masamune Shirow* manga's setting and designs, this action-platformer is a great mix of eye candy and rock-solid gameplay. It's great fun to play by itself, but the big incentives to keep pushing are the gorgeous animated cinematics by Production I.G., and the intro movie is among the best on the PlayStation (3 minutes of animation with the cel count of an hour-long OVA). Hop in your Fuchikoma and prepare for urban warfare.

The spidery little Fuchi tank is amazingly mobile; it can leap atop containers, crawl up the sides of buildings, or scuttle along the underside of overpasses while firing its cannon and homing missiles. The levels are varied, the opposition is stiff, and the training mode has some great secrets to uncover. Ghost in the Shell is one of the finest 3D adventures on the PlayStation.



WILD 9

Developer

Shiny

Publisher

Interplay

Rating



Way, way underrated, or should I say penalized? The Wild 9 suffered a mediocre reception at best, based, for the most part, on a couple of years worth of delays, as the game underwent a couple of redesigns. Shiny, like many companies, has had its share of turbulence, but worry thee not; they will never release a budge game. The Wild 9 is a kick-ass 2.5D action platformer with ample gameplay, rippin tunes, and one helluva cool torture weapon. It's a little on the short side, but oh so very worth the price to own. Do yourself a favor and have a look. It really is all good.

OVERVIEW

38	Ape Escape	A-	54	Star Wars Episode I	B-
	Crash Team Racing	A-		South Park	B-
				Suikoden 2	B+
40	Dino Crisis	A		Syphon Filter	B+
	Final Fantasy VIII	A	55	T'ai Fu	B+
				Tarzan	B-
44	Grandia	A-		Tail Concerto	B-
	Legacy of Kain: SR	A-	56	Um Jammer Lammy	B
				Vandal Hearts 2	B+
	Lunar: SSS	A-		Xena	B-
	R-Type Delta	A-	57	Army Men Air Attack	C+
				Asteroids	C-
46	Resident Evil 3	A		BB: Lost in Time	C-
	Ridge Racer 4	A-		Dead in the Water	D+
47	Silent Hill	A		Demolition Racer	C-
	Silhouette Mirage	A-		Fatal Fury WA	C
48	Spyro 2	A-	58	Hot Wheels	C+
	Thousand Arms	A-		Jet Moto 3	D
	Wipeout 3	A-		Kingsley	C+
49	Ace combat 3	B		Konami Classics	C+
	Blast Radius	B-		Legend of Legaia	C+
	Bloody Roar 2	B		Monaco GP	C
50	Chocobo Racing	B	59	Monkey Hero	D
	Croc 2	B		Rat Attack	C-
	Driver	B+		Ricky C.C.M.	C+
	Echo Night	B-		Rising Zan	C+
51	Ehrgeiz	B		Rushdown	D+
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	Roll Cage	B			

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	Animaniacs Bowling	B+		NHL Faceoff 2000	B
	Contender	C-		Thrasher: Skate & Destroy	C
72	Cyber Tiger	B-	75	Sled Storm	B+
	Fisherman's Bait	C-		Street Sk8r	B-
	Gameday 2000	C+		Tony Hawk	A
	Madden 2000	C+		Xtreme 2	B
	March Madness	C-		WWF Attitude	B-
73	MLB 2000	B+			
	MTV Snowboarding	B+			
	NBA Basketball 2K	B-			
	Nascar 2000	B			
	NCAA Gamebreaker	B+			

0991725-0019AU

CPU: SH4

Developer: Hitachi

Processor Speed: 200 MHz/360 MIPS

Floating Point Unit Speed: 1.4 GFLOPS

Main Ram: 16 Megabytes

Operating System: Boot from CD;

- Custom Windows CE
- Custom Sega OS

Media: 12x GD-ROM drive

- 1.2 Gigabyte Capacity

Dimensions: 7 7/16" x 7 11/16" x 3"

Weight: 4.4 lbs

Modem: Removable 56 Kbps winmodem

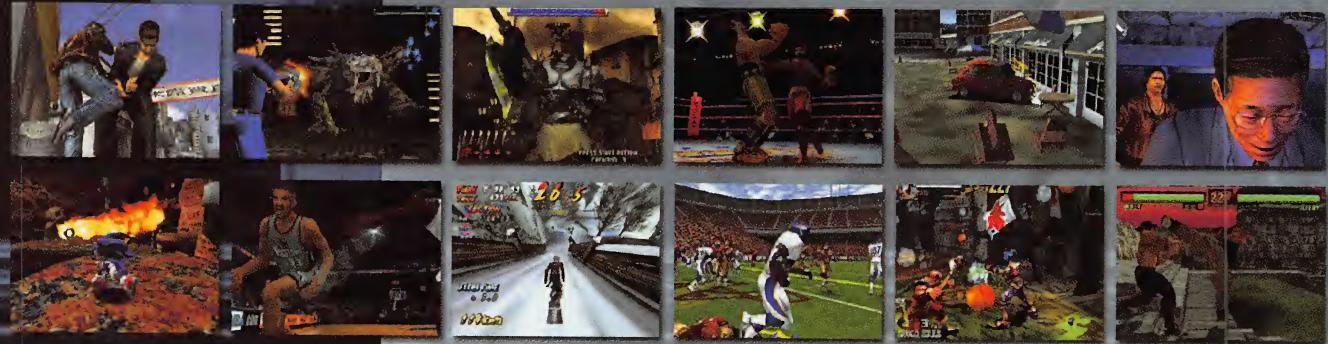
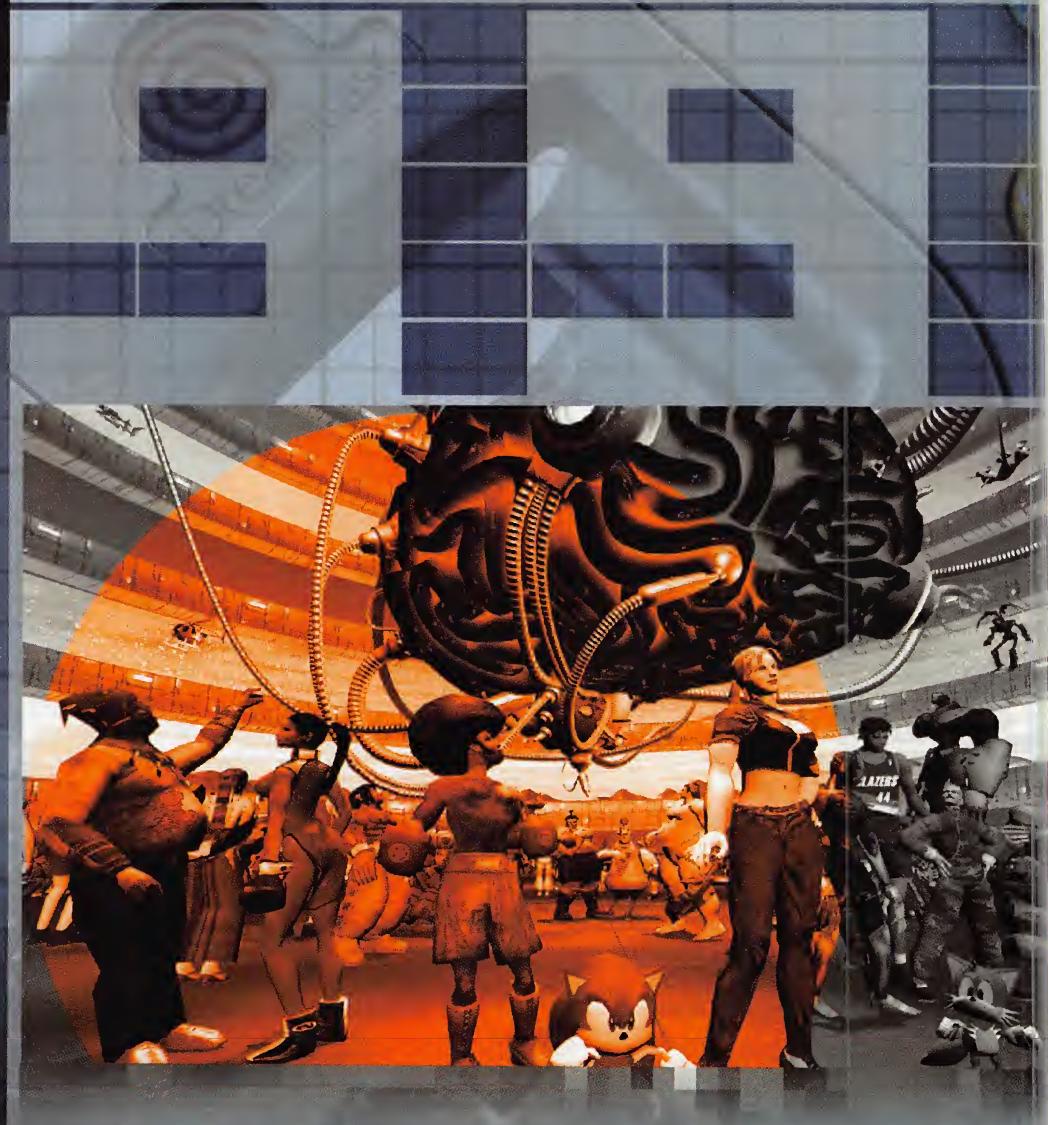
Hardware: Power VR (Second Generation)

Developer: NEC and VideoLogic

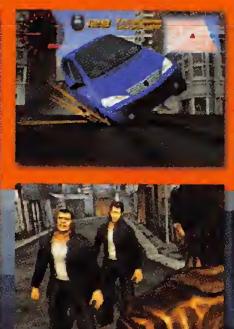
Video Ram: 8 Megabytes (Combined)

Peak polygons per second: 3 Million

Fill Rate: 200 Million pixels per second.



Sega Dreamcast





Dreamcast™
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SEGA
DREAMCAST



DREAMCAST

A TITLES

HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2

Grade

A-
1-2

Rating



This pixel-perfect port of the Naomi-powered arcade shooter brings one of the most addictive and challenging light-gun games home in grand style. Blowing apart zombie heads never looked better or been as fun. You'll be picking off the undead and blasting boss' weak spots with a glee that's probably a little unhealthy. Moving through richly rendered environments, your hands will sweat as zombies leap from behind doors or drop down from above, presenting themselves

with wonderfully satisfying placement in front of you. But the boss encounters prove to be the most thrilling, as their quick and deadly patterns of attack must

Developer

Sega

Publisher

Sega

be mastered if you have any intention of continuing through to the end. Make no mistake, this is a tough, tough shooter. With added Dreamcast features, this is a first-rate arcade port. There's never been a more challenging nor better looking gun game on a home console.



MARVEL VS. CAPCOM

Developer

Capcom

Publisher

Capcom

Grade

A-
1-2

Rating



With Marvel vs. Capcom, many doubts have been squashed regarding the DC's ability to handle sprites, much less handle a 2D beast like MvC, which up until now, only a CPS2 motherboard could properly deliver. MvC

is perhaps the best coin-op conversion in Capcom's history. In a display of raw muscle, MvC brings many a smile to the faces of fighting fanatics with its almost nil load times and faithful reproduction of the overly animated and highly taxing, huge on-screen sprites. With a mélange of the best Marvel and Capcom characters, MvC is the pinnacle of the "vs." series. This all-star roster tips the 15+ mark with the addition of hidden "Shadow" characters, as well as familiar faces in the form of "Helper" characters, which can be summoned for a single attack. As luck would have it, many of the features specific to only the "vs." universe simply cannot be accomplished via the stock DC controller.





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POWER STONE

Grade



Rating



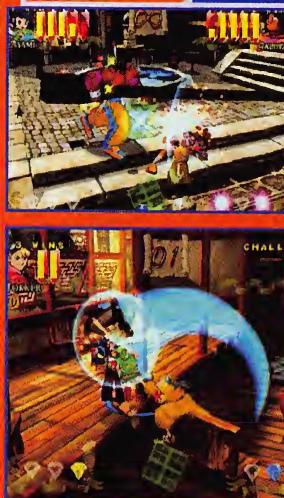
1-2

Developer

Capcom

Publisher

Capcom



Power Stone is a "go anywhere" action fighter showcasing environmental interaction and pure reaction combat. The game emphasizes pure timing, with no huge combos to execute and no blocking whatsoever. Initially, PS appears to be very simple. This is a clever approach, however, as even casual gamers can get into the fighting right away. But beneath this undeniably accessible gameplay you'll find depth, timing, and gorgeous control the likes of which most free-roaming 3D fighters only dream. Each meticulously detailed, high-res environment offers its own unique interactive 3D element—places to climb, jump to, and objects to crush and destroy or use against your opponent.

Throughout the intense battles, items appear for you to use. The most important items by far are the glowing "power stone" jewels. Collect three during a match and your character transforms into an all-powerful fighter capable of mass destruction. Power Stone is an absolute spectacle to behold and a wickedly fun gameplay experience.



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SONIC ADVENTURE

Developer

Sonic Team

Publisher

Sega

The first level in Sonic Adventure offers one of the great moments in gaming. An enormous whale crashes through a winding pier as it pursues a fleeing Sonic. As our hero races madly toward the screen,

the whale splashes in and out of the water, dangerously close to catching up, but Sonic is always one step ahead. For all the great images the game throws at you, though, Sonic Adventure cannot be accused of being divorced from good gameplay. A few levels become more involving and deliberately paced than others, offering some nifty platforming elements, but soon enough, Sonic returns to what he does best—running through winding courses at blistering speeds. With 12 levels, the Sonic quest in the game is immensely satisfying, but Sonic Team chose to add five additional characters. Although they're hampered by bugs and weak voice acting, these unique new quests are a blast to play. Sonic Adventure is undoubtedly one of the Dreamcast's must-buys.



1



THE KING OF FIGHTERS

DREAM MATCH 1999

TM



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on King of Fighters Dream Match 1999 for the

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Sega
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SOUL CALIBUR

Still not sure whether the Dreamcast is worthy of attention? Spend a few minutes in the presence of Soul Calibur, and you'll be a believer. This masterpiece makes other home fighting games look grimly stunted and it plays brilliantly.

Focused on

weapons combat, it inherently embodies a unique current of strategy. Namco has cultivated a game that feels truly original. Parrying and deft command of your fighter in 3D space are crucial to opening an opponent up for an attack, and there is such a multitude of moves to discover that each fight seems to reveal something new. SC will ultimately leave its mark with critics. The main attraction is the characters modeled with unparalleled detail, and compelling realism. A bold symphonic score, the ambience, and superb sound effects create an immersion factor. There is such a generation to detail paid to every aspect of Soul Calibur. The game is a labor of love.



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DREAMCAST

B TITLES

AIR FORCE DELTA

Developer

Konami

Publisher

Konami

Grade

B-
1

Rating

E
ESRB

What makes Air Force Delta worth playing is a great set of missions. Irrespective of the slightly annoying and slow dogfights, you'll



really enjoy some of the tasks set before you: protecting a high-rise from a salvo of oncoming missiles, barnstorming through an enemy hangar carved into a mountain, blasting supplies being airdropped from C5Bs, knocking solar panels off a falling satellite. There's no shortage of planes or missions, and one can't turn a blind eye to the great looking Dreamcast visuals. Though AFD is not quite broad enough in its appeal to completely convert players who never got into the likes of Ace Combat, it's more than capable of delivering a few airborne thrills to just about anyone.

0991725-0019AU:

BLUE STINGER

Grade

B
1

Rating

M
MATURE
ESRB

Developer Climax Graphics

Publisher Activision

Blue Stinger has received mixed reviews for a number of reasons, but we feel the game merits purchase. The environments in BS are a testament to the Dreamcast's prowess, especially when you take into consideration that this game began creation long before development tools were available. With two selectable characters to choose and a variety of short and long-range weapons, as diverse as they are brutally lethal, Blue Stinger offers a man-sized adventure. Coupled with the 15-20 hours of top-notch task-based gameplay, beautiful visuals and an inspired motif, Blue Stinger is an attractive Dreamcast launch title. It's a shame portions were edited, like the infamous fuel tower scene and the

bloody porno section of the Happy Market, but on the bright side, the camera system has undergone much improvement.



EVOLUTION

Grade

B
1

Rating

RP
RATED
ESRB

Developer Sting

Publisher Ubi Soft

A good RPG should be a satisfying, exhausting ordeal. It should evoke some sense of progressive accomplishment after each and



every hour of gameplay, and it should be able to isolate you for long stretches of time in complete, guiltless immersion. Evolution fulfills several of these requirements of the genre, and its defining characteristic is its Randomly Generated Dungeon

gameplay. The game also has detailed characters with fully animated facial expressions, easily comprehended menus, and the battles load almost instantly. Evolution is a great first-generation DC title that provides simple yet involving dungeon gameplay and should be played by fans of the genre.

EXPENDABLE

Grade

B-
1-2

Rating

RP
RATED
ESRB

Developer Rage

Publisher Infogrames

Rage's graphics are as flashy as ever, but what's most appealing about Expendable is that it's not just a lot of eye candy that you'll stroll through the day you get it home. Rather, this is a well-thought-out shooter that you will need to play many times to complete. There's great fulfillment to be found in the raw intensity of over 20 diverse locales. Waves of enemies and obstacles lie before you, as well as an array of nifty weapons (love that minigun whine) to blow them to smithereens with. There are switches to throw, paths to find, and all the while the soundtrack pumps as the pyrotechnics blaze at a previously unseen level. The

bosses are meaty too, making Expendable a complete package. If you're into 3D shooting, you've arrived.





Remember the original Monaco GP? Since

then, only one game has even come close to re-igniting the desire to really get into an F1 racer. Coincidentally (or perhaps not) it was also a Ubi Soft port - F1 Pole Position for the N64. Ubi always tweak their acquisitions to perfection, and they have done so again with Monaco GP for the DC, the new benchmark for F1 arcade and simulation racing. What was a good import is now a near-great U.S. Dreamcast title with tweaks in just about every facet of the game. It's all here, folks: every racing mode, every team, all the tuning elements, good music, great camera options, and all the tracks you know and love. This is a must for F1 fans.

MONACO GRAND PRIX

Developer Ubi Soft

Publisher Ubi Soft



PEN PEN TRI-ICE-LON

Developer General Ent.

Publisher Infogrames

Welcome to the Pen Pen Tri-ice-lon! Released in America by Infogrames with all of its wackiness intact, it wouldn't work any



other way. The team at General Entertainment responsible for this year's wackiest racer have dressed up the U.S. Tri-ice-lon since its Japanese debut, with an all-new 3D intro and comical new loading screens. The game is a beautiful sight no matter how many times you play it, and really takes alternative racing to new extremes, swimming, waddling, skipping along with your flippers or what-have-you. Long courses with inspired design, a truly busted quiver of mutated characters (you can even dress 'em up in a variety of wacky headgear) and crazy tunes make this a must-own DC title.

0991725-0019AU



Developer Midway

Publisher Midway

For a pure knock-down drag-out arcade brawler, Midway's Ready 2 Rumble certainly delivers the goods, and then some. Not relying solely on its good looks, R2R lets you train and bring any of the combatants up through the ranks, and sports fierce bosses and an unexpected diversity of locales. Add real-time swelling and tooth loss, a plethora of cameras to play with, an impressive assortment of brawlers, and hot mamas with gelatin hooters and, well, there's a lot to like! One of the most popular launch titles for the Dreamcast, a sequel is

READY 2 RUMBLE BOXING



already in the works. Now all we need is Don King to tell us who will win each fight!

SLAVE ZERO

Developer Accolade

Publisher Infogrames

Slave Zero's sorties, a sequence of sci-fi scenarios that unfold with you at center stage, range from seek-and-destroy to rescue and



sentinel duty, and they all take you deep into a futuristic city bustling with life and laden with gorgeous arenas. Slave Zero is one of the meanest and most highly animated mechs that you'll ever have the pleasure to manipulate. His Freddy Krueger-like claw fingers animate nimbly as his heavily jointed arms almost float with animation, and the lurching vertebrae that connects his body makes everything he does look dramatic. While the game around him is a solid 3D mission-based shooter, sadly, it chugs a bit, and suffers from repetitious surroundings, so what could have been great is just good.

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3

Developer Capcom

Publisher Capcom

Grade B+
1-2

Rating ESRB T

Capcom seems to be learning from their competition. Street Fighter Alpha 3 has a roster of over thirty characters, on the scale of an



SNK King of Fighters game. It's list of console-exclusive play modes, meanwhile, rivals a Namco home conversion. Along with the standard arcade and versus modes, you can also fight in survival, training, two-on-one, or World Tour modes. Capcom claims this version of SFA3 is arcade perfect, and it's a hard claim to dispute. The animation is smooth, and load times are unnoticeable. Typical 2D fighter caveats apply, of course. The Dreamcast pad doesn't work too well with SFA3. Serious fighting fans are advised to play with the arcade stick, which allows easier execution of combinations and special moves.

0991725-0019AU

Grade B-
1-2

Rating ESRB E

Developer Criterion

Publisher Ubi Soft

Ubi Soft has taken Criterion's lackluster Redline Racer and quickly transformed it into a formidable contender. The addition of the Suzuki Alstare license grants us realistic versions of Suzuki's stock and factory racers, along with refinements to just about every other aspect of the game. The courses have undergone major re-designs to the extent that they are nearly unrecognizable – sort of an "out with the bad, in with the good" scenario. The balance has also been tweaked so you can't pull half lap leads in a three lap race. The result of Ubi's tender loving care is a fun arcade racer. Suzuki lacks the realistic feel of a full-on GP simulation,

SUZUKI ALSTARE RACING

but otherwise it's a worthy racer for your Dreamcast.



TNN HARDCORE HEAT

Developer CRI

Publisher ASC Games

Grade B+
1-2

Rating ESRB K

TNN Hard Core Heat is the shape of things to come – at least things with steering wheels. The vast, realistic vehicle characteristics carry



over into the game exactly as they should. Each car has distinct advantages and disadvantages based on weight vs. displacement, etc. The courses, although some are too short, are equally impressive. Beyond the presence of varied terrain is the actual feel that results from each type. Gravel reacts like gravel, mud like mud, and so on. Cars even get dirty as they race, and the drivers animate realistically – shifting, braking, steering, you name it. Add to this all sorts of customizing options and all the modes you could ask for, and you've got yourself one heck of a spiffy off-road racer.

Grade B-
1-2

Rating ESRB K

Developer Genki

Publisher Crave

TOKYO XTREME RACER

First and foremost, Tokyo Xtreme Racer does one thing that no other driving game has come close to doing as well, and that is provide a truly adrenaline-boosting sense of challenge. You'll select an opponent and begin to weave your way through the beautiful traffic-filled lanes of late-night Tokyo. Visually the game is stunning, with gorgeous reflections and effects that look more like replays than actual gameplay. The complaints? One environment and no weather changes, ever. The sun never comes up in Tokyo Xtreme, but it is definitely one wild night.



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B
Grade
1-4Rating
RP

Developer No Cliche

Publisher Sega

TOY COMMANDER

Mission after mission, you dive deeper and deeper into a mad assault against hordes of killer toys. Fly planes, drive trucks and assault vehicles and even dispatch army men. The missions range from simple to complex and cover a wide variety of gameplay. You earn the right to fight each room guardian by first beating its time in each mission and then the guardian itself. Once defeated, the guardians will help you on your mission. This will probably end up as one of the most interesting, but overlooked, Dreamcast games. Toy Commander is a deep, intricate, mission-based game with well over 40 hours worth of quality gameplay packed in. If you have the means to do so, check this one out.



TRICK STYLE

B
Grade
1-2Rating
E
ESRB

Developer Criterion

Publisher Acclaim

The key to success through much of Acclaim's Trick Style lies in taking the correct line towards the finish of each race. But at the



conclusion of this rather large racing adventure, you'll be tested by one of the hardest courses in gaming history. Here, the in-game training, where you learn all of the tricks you acquire, is put to the ultimate test. The control is agreeably floaty, as it should be; you're floating, and therefore it's a bit tricky, but the physics are quite forgiving. Graphically, it's a gorgeous game. The frame rate hovers at around 30, which seems low, but given the insane amount of architecture present, you'll hardly notice or care. The thick, heavy electronica music fits perfectly.

0991725-0019AU

B
Grade
1-2Rating
T
ESRB

Developer Sega AM2/Genki

Publisher Sega

VF3 has really been shown-up by Soul Calibur, both graphically and in the accessibility of its gameplay, and Yu Suzuki's game now feels dry and a little dated. If Genki's conversion had been an exact match of the original, VF3 might have held up better. It still looks incredible, of course, and the gameplay is virtually arcade perfect, meaning that it's very deep and realistic, something which has seemingly kept American gamers at a distance. But for those that give it the time, VF3 is a wonderfully satisfying game



VIRTUA FIGHTER 3D

to master, though most players would probably prefer the flash of Soul Calibur to the staunch realism of VF3.

DREAMCAST

C/LOWER

AERO WINGS

Developer CRI

Publisher Crave



Aero Wings is a true flight simulator. Placing you in the role of a JASDF Blue Impulse stunt pilot, it gives you complete control over



your plane, down to the flaps, air brakes, and landing gear. The object of the game is to become skilled at stunts, formation flying, and precise maneuvering, along the lines of Pilotwings (both games include a certain amount of flying through rings, for example). Unlike Nintendo's offering, though, action is not on the training syllabus, even in the smallest of doses. The sensation of flight can be almost dizzying at times, but it's not enough to jump-start Aero Wings' benign, narrow nature.

0991725-0019AU



Developer Sega AM1

Publisher Sega

DYNAMITE COP

Dynamite Cop is technically strong, running at 60 fps in hi-res, with excellent character animation and colorful environments. The Dreamcast version is obviously a step up from the Model 2 arcade original, for which Sega is to be commended. Your dynamite detectives possess a wide arsenal of easy-to-master beat-em-up moves, and there are dozens of weapons and items to grab and pulverize the opposition with.

Nearly everything in Dynamite Cop is handled competently, then, but it's too short and simple, and there's not much inspiration evident, especially in the way of character design. The structure of the game also limits your freedom; instead of taking place in large, continuous stages (a la Streets of Rage) you're confined to small, discrete battlegrounds. DC just isn't deep enough to merit a purchase.



HYDRO THUNDER

Developer Eurocom

Publisher Midway

To capture a first-place finish in Hydro Thunder, you must (a) maintain a constant booster charge and (b) take every shortcut.



That's the kind of quarter-crunching game design that works fine in the arcades, but proves tiresome at home. The openness of the tracks further deflates the gameplay, undermining any sense of speed and making skillful racing confrontations with other boats nonexistent. You're not racing against the other boats, or the water (Nintendo's Wave Race has much better water physics), but simply your own ability to hit the powerups and hidden passages. If not for its looks, Hydro Thunder wouldn't make a ripple in the Dreamcast lineup.



Developer Eurocom

Publisher Midway

MORTAL KOMBAT GOLD

At its best, Mortal Kombat was never a ground-breaker as far as gameplay goes, and this series has done nothing to change the way it plays since MK3 at best. Now, in a time when video games are becoming expressions of great imagination and design, the remarkably spiritless, slipshod, assembly-line Mortal Kombat Gold inspires only disappointment and incredulity. It makes no worthwhile use of its 3D setting, aside from some very clumsy sidestepping. The graphics are saddening compared to the beauty of Soul Calibur, and more importantly MK Gold has none of that game's inspired

design artistry. The franchise's death scenes remain the only attraction, which is why we find this game even more of a turn off.





DREAMCAST

review pending

Rating



Developer Toka/Piggyback

Publisher Mindscape

Soul Fighter brings the beat 'em up category impressive enemy AI, stunning moves, powerful combos, and a new level of visual stimuli. But for the most part, this is still a straight beat 'em up, all dressed up for the next generation. The gameplay in Soul Fighter, while not complex in terms of play mechanics, is definitely well-thought-out, if not aimed squarely at the seasoned gamer. Taking down the many enemies with the martial artist of your choice (there are three) is a matter of careful positioning, jockeying for an opening to take out one foe at a time with a well-delivered combination blow. Alternatively, you can strike from a distance; after acquiring secondary weapons like knives or crossbow bolts, you can switch to a first-person sniping mode and plant sharp objects into the opposition with pinpoint accuracy.



SOUL FIGHTER

Rating



SEGA RALLY 2

Developer AM Annex

Publisher Sega



Sega Rally 2's on-again off-again Internet multiplayer option now seems to be off for the US release, slated to happen this November. If it indeed ships without that feature, it's still a great conversion of the Model 3 Step 2 original, with speed and addictive powersliding to spare. The single-player game certainly has depth, with a stack of console-exclusive cars and a challenging championship mode. On-line play would send Rally charging ahead of the Dreamcast racing pack, though. Imagine Quake clans replaced by Rally teams; frag counts rendered obsolete by record times on the Desert track. This could strike a blow for nonviolent competitive Internet gaming; think of the good it would do for the industry's reputation. But perhaps we're getting carried away. Net play or no net play, Rally 2 will be the Dreamcast's best racer.

0991725-0019AU •



Developer

Ubi Soft

Publisher

Ubi Soft

The Dreamcast game most likely to be nominated for game of the year, Rayman 2, brings the system another deep, immersive platforming adventure. Having completed the game on the Nintendo 64, we wait with bated breath for this silky smooth, hi-res version, which should feature the same precise analog control. The frame-rate is higher, and the already-detailed environments look much, much better. If you want to experience the quality of the PC version without all the hassles and at a fraction of the cost, Rayman on the Dreamcast is the way to go.



RAYMAN 2



DREAMCAST

SPORTS DC

NBA 2000

Developer Visual Concepts

Publisher

Sega

NBA2K may provide courtside fans with the most realistic basketball experience yet contained within a videogame. Its control is precise, its interface is smooth, and the



intensity of the action is unwavering. After you come to grips with the insanely beautiful visuals, the sharp player models and the smooth motion capture, the next-most-impressive aspect of the game will be the precise replication of each different team and, for that matter, player.

NBA2K could be the most hardcore basketball simulator ever conceived. It forces quick, intelligent thinking followed by perfectly-timed button commands; if you're looking to just dunk, you'll soon find there's much more to it. The feat Visual Concepts has accomplished may be unprecedented. They have made no compromise in either graphics or gameplay.

Grade

A

1-4

Rating

E

EVERYONE

Sega DC all soft '99



NFL 2000

Developer Visual Concepts

Publisher

Sega

Grade

A

1-4

Rating

E

EVERYONE



The most common initial reaction to NFL2K? For a split second, it seems like a real broadcast. The player models, with their high poly counts, sharp textures, and well-mapped faces, are very close to the real thing. The other half of the realism is the animation and collision, though. The players don't just look real, they move realistically. When they meet, crashing together at the line or on a downfield tackle, there aren't any clipping errors, and both players animate just right.

NFL2K has superb sim depth, to the

extent that the purity of the gameplay experience will literally take you by surprise. The control is zeroed in; you'll feel that as you guide your receivers with well-led passes, or push your backs through the line and down-field with precisely-executed maneuvers. We congratulate Visual Concepts on the finest game of video football yet.

SEGA SPORTS NFL 2K





BLITZ 2000

Developer

Midway

Publisher

Midway

If you play games alone, NFL Blitz 2000 may not be the soundest purchase. It was designed to eat quarters in the arcades, not necessarily to provide replay value at home, and the added create-a-play option doesn't really add much to such a simple game. If you have friends to take on, however, look no further. Blitz 2000 is a graphical step up from last year's version, replicated to arcade perfection on the Dreamcast; it supports four players, none of whom need to spend time adjusting themselves to the controls, and the irreverent presentation is admirably suited to friendly competition.



FLNG 2 FLNG

Developer

Sega

Publisher

Sega



CART racing, like NASCAR, is hard to replicate in a fashion that appeals to the casual fan as well as the enthusiast; Sega's offering is a good example of the problem. The oval tracks are dull and too easy, the city tracks are slow and too frustrating. The weak AI doesn't help matters. Your opponents don't drive in a fashion that's realistic or exciting, and you'll often crash through no fault of your own when trying to pass them. Aside from the nice graphics and licensed features, this budding franchise needs some time in the garage.

0991725-0019AU



Developer

Sega

Publisher

Sega

Many scoff at the idea of virtual fishing, but put a rod controller in their hands and see whether they'll be willing to put it down in half an hour. Sega Bass Fishing (known as "Get Bass" in Japan, which we note here because it's the coolest game title ever) is a great fishing game with which to convert the unfaithful. The Dreamcast version is a perfect port of the arcade original; its gameplay is fast and easy to get into, and the graphics are excellent, both the varied backgrounds and the realistic fish you hunt in them. In conjunction with the superb Sega fishing controller, this is a great purchase for those in search of something different.



GET BASS

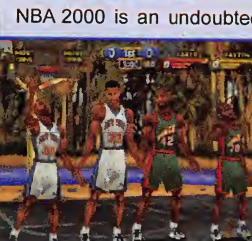
NBA SHOWTIME

Developer

Midway

Publisher

Midway



NBA 2000 is an undoubtedly fine sports sim, but

NBA Showtime is perhaps an equally fine specimen of the arcade niche. Based on NBA Jam's classic gameplay model and spruced up with better-than-the-arcade graphics, Showtime should be as good a multiplayer experience as NFL Blitz, and more fun alone. Check out the plethora of 3D arenas, admire the beefy, well-built player models (complete with perfect digitized faces), and as always, see if you can break the backboard with your best dunk.

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SEGA

DREAMCAST overview

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BEST OF PC '99

Grade

B+

Rating



Developer

Rebellion

Publisher

Fox Interactive

The very fact that you can relive those incredible battle moments from the classic movies is reason enough to buy AVP, but there is so much more than nostalgia attached to this first-person shooter. The game allows you to play as the Alien, the Predator, or a Colonial Marine. Each of the characters has their own agenda, methods of survival, and different attributes, which are

enough to make them wholly different but, at the same time, equal and well-balanced. Graphically, the engine is fantastic, and never really succumbs to lag or texture break up, with everything bobbing along at a frantic pace. AVP is one of the finest PC titles released over the last few years and should not be missed at any price.



BALDUR'S GATE



Developer

Bioware

Publisher

Interplay

Grade

A-

Rating



Baldur's Gate is an RPG that contains a wondrous mix of sights, sounds and activity that will have you lost in an alternate world for days at a time. That's because the game is a perfected modern interpretation of the venerable AD&D role-playing experience: a gripping story, an illustrious visual presentation, exceptional musical scores, a wonderful sense of ambience, a dual

battle system that provides the best of two worlds, and, of course, strict adherence to AD&D rules. It has been a long time since an RPG has come together this well. Whether it's played solo or as part of an online quest, this game is fantastic. This is a must-have for RPG fans, and PC gamers of all kinds for that matter.

0991725-0019AU

C&C: TIBERIAN SUN



With the addition of soldier waypoints and visible lines of direction – not to mention the incredible graphic improvement and the addition of a load of new vehicles and structures – Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun is ready to once again own the RTS world. The story still surrounds the mysterious mineral Tiberium; and this time, a third faction is added

to the mix – people who have been mutated by the Tiberium. Another added strategic element has been added in that walking through Tib can now kill. The FMV is top-notch, with superb acting from James Earl Jones and Michael Biehn. If you liked C&C, you probably already bought this game; if you want to get into RTS games, this is the one to cut your teeth on.

DIABLO 2



Developer

Blizzard

Publisher

Blizzard

Grade

RP

Rating



With Nethack's legendary gameplay and lovely modern graphics, Diablo was described by some, with straight faces, as rock cocaine in digital form. The sequel brings more of everything, and almost all the bad stuff looks to be banished, like cheating in net play (hopefully), leaving Diablo junkies to find surcease on their own. Sure, the action in Diablo was

part of the fun, but what was really involving was the exploration – discovering new areas and finding new things throughout the game. Diablo II should provide even more hour-wasting potential, with outdoor areas, new character classes, side quests, and many more items and spells to collect and use.

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**DRAKAN**

Developer: Surreal Software | Publisher: Psygnosis

Drakan: Order of the Flame may have quite possibly given birth to the replacement to Lara Croft with the beautiful, voluptuous protagonist, Rynn. But she's only a smidgen of what makes Drakan a solid purchase. After many side quests through the fantasy world of Drakan, Rynn will ultimately forge bonds

with the dragon Arok and must learn the ways of the Dragon Riders. The aerial quests are amazing and reminds one of the final vignette in Heavy Metal. This is a deep, involving title with a huge quest to tackle, fully developed action, an excellent fantasy theme and story, and strong visuals and sound.

**DUNGEON KEEPER 2**

Developer: Bullfrog | Publisher: Electronic Arts



Hatch evil ogres and menacing deities to do your bidding against the powers of good in Dungeon Keeper 2, a more refined version of the celebrated original, and the best game of its kind. Constructing subterranean dungeons to house your demon squads, you're prompted by the evilest of evil narration. DK2 features some of the best voice acting

you'll ever hear. Carving out libraries (where your oracles can study spell casting), treasures, training areas and quarters for your minions is immediately user friendly and extremely satisfying, especially once your hordlings commence on gang killing those who would breach their lush new quarters.

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EVERQUEST

Developer: Verant | Publisher: 989 Studios



For the online gaming community, 989 should be selling EverQuest with a "Satisfaction Guaranteed" label in tow. Normally we'd be adverse to applying such a bold statement to a game as genre-defying as EQ, but it really is that good. EQ involves thousands of very real, absolutely unique characters in a massive online fantasy world. Events are never, ever pre-determined. With up to 1,500 players per server interacting within the same world at one time, you are as dependent upon fellow gamer as you are upon the NPC-run shops and guilds

that aid you in your quest. Players make their way through huge fully realized three-dimensional landscapes, free to progress at whatever pace they should desire, in any direction they deem to be worthy of travel. Enter the world of Corona and take on the role of a number of monumentally buildable characters: Humans, Ogres, Elves, Gnomes, Dwarves, Clerics, Warriors, Rangers, or Shaman. The future of online gaming is at hand.

**GRIM FANDANGO**

Developer: LucasArts | Publisher: LucasArts



A Lucas Arts digital delight, Grim Fandango sounds wacky on paper: a Mexican-influenced, film-noir-style adventure/drama/comedy/mystery featuring paper-mâché skeletons skipping around the Land of the Dead, each of them sporting cool threads, driving classic cars, and smoking cigarettes. Well, there's a bit more to it than that, and not all of them smoke cigarettes. Manny, our protagonist, is a simple skeleton who's paying his dues by collecting those recently departed. All was well and slow, until he mistakenly

tangled himself into a conspiracy that leads him through a point-and-click adventure full of danger, suspense, humor, and everything else we expect from a cool LA game. Without giving away too much, the compelling storyline is a bit reminiscent of Chinatown. The dialog, of course, is excellently written, the soundtrack is groovy, and the graphics engine is sharp. If you don't mind stumbling through a few thousand mind-numbing puzzles, we couldn't recommend this title more to adventure game fans – or anyone else, for that matter.





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Grade



Rating



Developer

Illusion Softworks

HIDDEN AND DANGEROUS

Hidden & Dangerous couldn't be a more apt title for a game of this magnitude. Relying heavily on the art of stealth, your mission is to control a four man Allied SAS squad of soldiers against the Axis forces spanning over 23 missions (essentially the duration of World War II.) With multiple objectives per mission, H&D really excels when played over a network connection as teamwork is the key factor to success. By

either working as a collective, or in groups of two, your team's course of action could lead you all the way to 1945, the close of WWII.

Although H&D looks like a typical corridor shooter at first glance, it's entirely impossible to play with the "twitch" mentality, as each move must be carefully calculated from start to finish. Sound refreshing? Yes, we think so.



HOMEWORLD



Developer

Relic

Publisher

Sierra



Rating



Real-time strategy was one of the few genres not bitten by the 3D card bug, until Homeworld arrived. Relic's sci-fi sim eschews the flat 2D battlefield and sprite characters favored by Westwood and Blizzard for three movement axes and a huge array of fully polygonal spacecraft. As always, you gather resources to build units that defend and expand your territory, but the sensation of real combat in deep space is unprecedented. Build up your space fleet with your own customized colors, put your scientists to researching new engines of destruction, and set your mothership on the path to your Homeworld.

0991725-0019AU

HYPE: THE TIME QUEST



Developer

Ubi Soft Montreal

Publisher

Ubi Soft



Yes, it has a silly title and stars little plastic men with permanent smiles. And no, Hype: The Time Quest is not to be dismissed. Beneath the childlike exterior lies a complex action-RPG, one of the few games on the PC to earn a comparison to Zelda 64. It's the visual style and depth of gameplay Ubi has created that lets Hype transcend its premise. As your knight

travels about a world based on Playmobil castle sets (those huge things your mother would never buy for you), you master magic spells and the art of dragon-riding, in addition to classic puzzle-solving, platforming, and combat. This will be quite an epic PC gaming experience.

KINGPIN: LIFE OF CRIME

Developer

Xatrix

Publisher

Interplay



Xatrix has gone from making some well-regarded Quake mission packs to this full-scale game based on the Quake II engine. They seem to have progressed fairly far. Kingpin slows down Quake's run-and-gun gameplay, successfully capturing the close-up, deliberate, clumsy feel of a brawl in an alley or a shootout in the street. Although the documentation trips over its feet trying to

warn and apologize, Kingpin nevertheless offers a refreshingly raw attitude to accompany its street locales, well-built thuggish characters, and heavy Cypress Hill soundtrack. Working your way up the criminal hierarchy is great fun, provided bashing all those virtual heads in doesn't smite your conscience too acutely. This game is "insane in the membrane."

MESSEIH

Developer

Shiny

Publisher

Interplay



Shiny's Messiah will attract attention with its profanity, blasphemy, torture, and other naughtiness. The real reasons to play Messiah, though, are its detailed future world, realistic characters, and innovative gameplay. As Bob the Cherub, sent down to save dystopia from itself, you use your ability of pos-

session to leap from body to body and accomplish tasks. No one human can do it all; you'll need to possess a mechanic to fix an elevator, possess a cop to whack the guards downstairs, and then possess a nuclear technician to melt down the reactor they were guarding. Metal Gear-style sneaking, System Shock puzzles and action, and a dash of platforming make for an original gameplay experience, and yes, the torture and blasphemy do keep things interesting.

ONI

Developer

Bungie

Publisher

Bungie

Charge down a hallway at a troop of guards, firing your Seburo (tm) all the way, pistol-whip the nearest guy when the clip runs out, and kick the hell out of the rest of his associates. You'll be able to do all that and more with seamless ease in Oni. Bungie Software has decided to return to their action roots with this third-person 3D adventure. Oni's visual

style is inspired by Japanese animation, and its story promises to adhere to the Bungie standard for depth and involvement. Smoothly animated and extremely intelligent foes (with "emergent behavior," which sure sounds cool) should keep the tale from progressing into a linear a fashion.

**OUTCAST**

Developer

Appeal

Publisher

Infogrames



In Outcast, you'll spend an equal amount of time exploring and chatting with the natives as you will blowing the crap out of enemy soldiers and indigenous beasties. This marriage of RPG elements with traditional third-person action gives Outcast a very unique dynamic, which certainly won't be to everyone's taste. Initially, the non-linearity of the quest is quite imposing and there is an awful lot of talking in the game to get through. The terrain in Outcast is composed entirely of voxel graphic technology, which gives the game a very, shall we

say, unique look. The many regions of the game are lush, detailed and expansive while at the same time being both pixelly and glitchy. The polygon characters and creatures are, however, unanimously excellent and the engine sports some glorious eye candy, including the best water effect ever experienced in digital form, bar none. It's a huge game both in terms of length and scope. For those with the patience, Outcast should prove to be an engrossing, entertaining and, at times, amazing experience.

QUAKE 3

Developer

id Software

Publisher

id Software

Now that the series is into its third incarnation, Quake 3: Arena focuses on what made the Q series a staple of so many PC gamers' diet: multiplayer. Aptly titled Arena, id has done their homework and once again set the pace for others to follow.

By staying closer to the formula John Romero had created in Quake 1, Q3A taps into a larger core

audience, while faithfully retaining the melodic chaos of war which fans of the series have come to love. While not entirely a new game, Q3A does refine much of the established benchmarks id set years back with the original titles, such as interface functionality, network stability, and weapon balance.



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Grade

A

Rating



Developer

Ubi Soft

RAYMAN 2

A shoe-in for PC action game of the year, Rayman 2: The Great Escape brings to the PC its strongest 3D platformer to date. Paired with this year's other Ubi sensation, Tonic Trouble, which could only be fully realized on PC, it's a one-two platforming punch that should have PC-owning platform fans ecstatic. Rayman 2 has our limbless hero battling across several unique worlds in search of four sacred masks

that will earn him the aid of Polochus, his planet's and people's only hope against Razorbeard and his pirate Armada. The game's astounding visuals are complimented by its deep, immersive gameplay that put Rayman in all manner of precarious situations. Among other things you'll water ski, fly, and ride contraptions like living rockets and crazy monorails. This game truly has it all.

ROGUE SPEAR

Grade

B+

Rating



Developer

Red Storm

Publisher

Red Storm



Rogue Spear is an all-around solid espionage stealth game. The title continues the challenging missions of the Rainbow team, made famous with Tom Clancy's 1998 Rainbow Six game, as the covert operatives attempt once again to save the world. While similar in concept and design to Rainbow Six, Rogue Spear is vastly improved game, especially in the area of

graphics, where the attention to detail is quite an achievement and the environments are absolutely stunning. With other advancements, including enhanced character animations, the addition of characters from the Rainbow Six novel, as well as three different sniper rifles and excellent multi-player options, Rogue Spear is definitely a title to own.

0991725-0019AU

SHADOW MAN

Grade

A-

Rating



Developer

Iguana

Publisher

Acclaim

Now here's a PC action adventure tailor made for play on the PC, provided you're comfy with your current pad or joystick. With its deep voodoo themes and ritualistic mystique, Shadowman seemed a bit out of place on the Nintendo 64. Nevertheless, the game is still great on cartridge, but it is on PC that it really shines, or in this case let's say really burns. The PC version by the way is the one you see flashed on the N64 Shadowman commercial. They wish that was 64!

Shadowman consists of 50-plus hours of heavy puzzle, action, and 3D shooting along with heavy doses of exploration and discovery. Although we don't recommend Shadowman to rookie gamers or players who don't like to figure things out, everyone else should experience Part One of Acclaim's gritty new franchise. A Dreamcast version is in the pipes, by the way, so if you don't play PC games, don't sweat it.

**SILVER**

Grade

RP+

Developer

Spiral House

Publisher

Infogrames



Infogrames' long-awaited PC RPG, due to finally see release this October, promises to mix tight, twitch-style battles with an RPG's depth of setting and story. The pre-rendered world is said to be exceptionally gorgeous, and some of the gameplay elements should be quite interesting. For example, there's an option to control three characters at once, bringing to

mind Square's Secret of Mana. The many unfriendly denizens of the game's fantasy world invite you to have a great time doing them in. Devotees of Advanced Dungeons and Dragons might be interested to note that the game will feature the monstrous Tarrasque, in all its countryside-wasting glory. It's that kind of attention to detail that will make this an excellent game.

STAR WARS EPISODE I: RACER

Developer

Lucas Arts

Publisher

Lucas Arts



The attention to detail in this game is outstanding, with a presentation that looks identical to the film. Unlike most other Star Wars PC games, this one is easy to get started and jump right into. You get to choose from six upgradeable podracers all varying in speed, braking, control, traction and repair time. The controls are a bit unusual compared to other racing

games due to the tethered chassis connected to a pair of turbines, giving a swinging slingshot feeling, which we thought was refreshing. Playing alone isn't as heart pounding as playing multi-player, but nonetheless the re-creation of the film's 15-minute battle is dead-on.

THIEF

Developer

Looking Glass

Publisher

Eidos



Thief: The Dark Project is almost a perfect game. The stealth-based gameplay is ingenious, the enemy AI is incredibly advanced, and the level design is compelling. But the first-person shooter switches gears halfway through and changes the mood of the game with it. The decision was made to populate the later half of the levels with dim-witted monsters and zom-

bies, and to add in a handful of subterranean levels that have you hopping around like Lara Croft. Despite this, **Thief** is still a great game, one wholeheartedly recommended to those looking for something more in their FPS. It would have been wonderful if Looking Glass Studios had drenched the rest of the game with the aesthetics the first few areas held.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

Developer Epic Megagames

Publisher GT Interactive



In yet another attempt to capture id's crown as king of the corridors, Epic Games overhauls their flagship title to butt heads in the market place with the mighty Quake series. While hampered dramatically in its first release with sub-par network and latency problems, **Unreal Tournament** washes away the tarnish its predecessor left behind. Titled **Unreal** for its graphics, Epic

once again ups the ante by displaying some of the most colorful textures of any first-person shooter. Add this to a new arsenal, secondary weapons, and a bevy of taunts, **UT** appears to be doing everything right. Now a mainly multiplayer game, **Unreal Tournament** offers enough of a twist on the cookie-cutter FPS concept to keep players coming back for more.

VAMPIRE

Developer

Redemption

Publisher

Activision



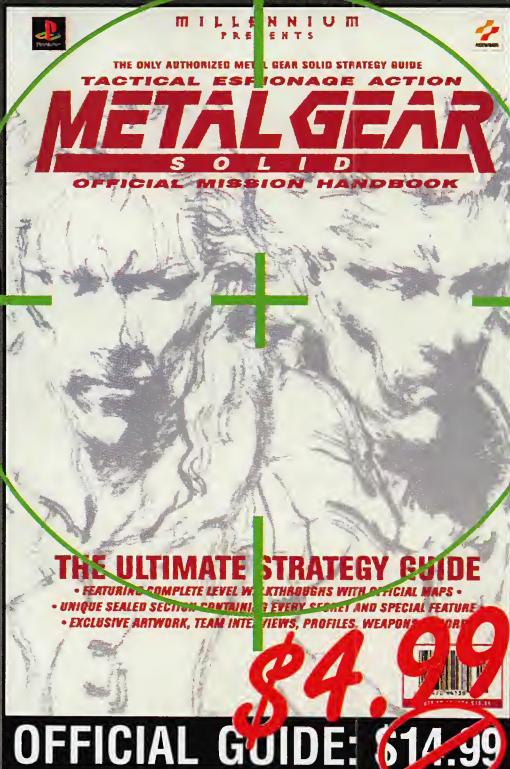
White Wolf Publishing's long-running pen and paper Vampire role-playing game is entering the realm of 3D with **Vampire: The Masquerade - Redemption**. Developers Nihilistic Software (some members of which were responsible for *Jedi Knight*, *Descent*, and *Requiem*) are attempting to recreate the traditional role-playing game with the use of a simple mouse-

only interface and advanced 3D engine. This action/role-playing feast spans eight hundred years and four different cities, including New York, London, and Vienna. With its accelerated 3D graphics, scads of NPCs to interact with, challenging puzzles, and multi-player options, **Vampire: The Masquerade** is sure to garner serious attention.

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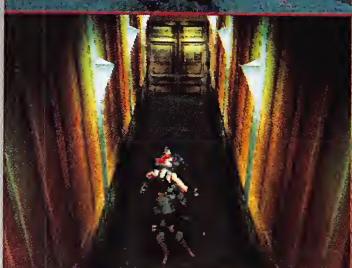
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GAME BOY COLOR



Developer

Camelot

Publisher

Nintendo

MARIO GOLF

Camelot have modified their proven golf engine (Hot Shots Golf/Mario Golf) for the mini-screen. We get an overhead view of each hole with full camera control to search for the best shots on the par fives, and combined 3D and overhead views during the fairway shots. The shots are controlled like in the console games, and while the greens don't have the same detail as the big brother versions, there's enough indication of hills and valleys to allow for precise shots. But most amazing is that Camelot has included a "Golf RPG" mode. Create a new character, and you'll start at the clubhouse, where you'll meet other golfers who will impart golfing wisdom to help improve your skills. You start with no experience points,

but as you train, you'll soon be prepared to enter the tournaments at the four courses included in the game with the ultimate goal to play the champ – Mario.



POKÉMON PINBALL

It's pinball Nintendo style! Players choose from red or blue playing boards, and all 150 Pokémons are here to collect in Nintendo's first



Rumble Pak-enhanced cartridge for Game Boy Color. Even folks who haven't a clue about the crit-

ter phenomenon will love this game! Each board displays a series of "cities," and different Pokémons are found in the different cities. Once a Pokémon is collected, it can be trained and evolved into other creatures, all of which is done by shooting the ball into traditional pinball-type switches, buttons, and chutes. And there's a Pokédex, which starts out blank, but quickly fills up as all 150 Pokémons are collected. In addition, a game can be stopped at literally any time, saved to memory, and then returned to later to be completed – quite useful for when it's time to go (or the boss comes creeping around).



Developer HAL Laboratory

Publisher Nintendo

9967548-6050FG



Developer

Nintendo

Publisher

Nintendo

SUPER MARIO BROS. DX

The original Super Mario Bros. is here in all of its 8-bit glory, ready for your fingers to start mashing buttons. But with the GBC DX version, Nintendo has added a Time Challenge mode, in which you take on each section of the game against the clock. They've also taken advantage of the Game Boy's link-up mode with a Head to Head Challenge. So if you've got a Game Link, a friend with a Game Boy and two copies of the game, you can go head-to-head in a Mario vs. Luigi race through eight special stages. And if that's not crazy enough, the "?" blocks act as switches on special walls and floors; so if Luigi hits a magic wall, he punches the block

and can continue, as the wall blocks Mario! Nintendo have even added a fortune teller game, in the vein of a Magic 8 Ball, and a calendar is accessible as well. GR heartily endorses this game for everyone's portable game library.

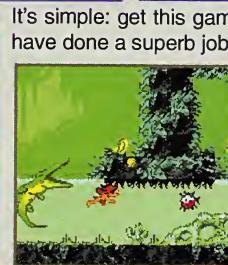


Developer Digital Eclipse

Publisher

Activision

TARZAN



It's simple: get this game! Digital Eclipse have done a superb job of animation and sound design, and the level design is fun and challenging, in the tradition of Super Mario Bros. (with vines!).

The game starts you playing as young Tarzan, and you'll progress to the ape friend Terk, then Jane, and finally adult Tarzan. Digital Eclipse added a hide-&seek game, where one player hides a character in the jungle, and then hands-off the game to a friend to find it. Also, a Paint'n'Print mode is available, in which you arrange various characters, plants, and props on one of four backgrounds, and print the results on the GB Printer. Tarzan for GBC should be considered one of the new classics, building on the foundations of older platformers and using the power of the new GBC to add flash and eye candy.



Grade

B:

Rating



LUCKY LUKE

Developer Infogrames

Publisher Infogrames

Hot off of his totally non-existent stint on the PS, Lucky Luke has moseyed onto the GBC where he'll more than likely win the respect of handheld lovers everywhere. Set in the wild, wild west, complete with tumbleweeds, banditos, Indians and guns-a-blazin', this game's a real hoot. Luke's 2D gameplay is a clever mix of shooting, platforming, and just a bit of puzzle solving. Complimenting these elements are excellent bonus rounds and stagecoach chases complete with parallax and big-time line scrolling. LL is definitely one of the better GBC games to appear so far in the burgeoning lineup.



R-TYPE DX

Developer Nintendo

Publisher Nintendo

An arcade machine in your pocket? Well, this little cartridge has the original black & white GB versions of



R-Type and R-Type II, as well as GBC-specific colored versions of each, plus the GBC-only R-Type DX. You'll be faced with the expected hordes of baddies and tough bosses to beat at the end of each level, with plenty of power-ups to help you complete your assigned task. Unlimited continues will certainly help the aim-deficient gamer get further in the game than the arcade versions might allow, but other than that (and the obvious difference in the screen size and technology) these are the same shooters we've pumped quarters into for years, only pocket-sized and portable!

9967548-6050FG

V-RALLY CHAMP. EDITION

Developer Infogrames

Publisher Infogrames

This little 8-bit cartridge scrambles to achieve a 3D-like racing effect, and surprisingly pulls it off. If you've played Infogrames' PS or N64 V-Rally offerings, the GBC version is immediately recognizable. Although there are only four cars here, the physics and feel of driving the little beasts is locked down - as good as can be had in such a small format. You'll find yourself rallying in 10 different locales on asphalt, snow, and dirt, and each car handles differently, depending on the conditions. Passwords are doled out after each successful championship, and

attaining these feels like gathering trophies. All that's missing is a little ear candy, as the music and sound effects are pretty sparse. Then again, Infogrames has devoted a lot of processing power to the gameplay, and that, ultimately, is what matters.



MARIO LAND 2

Developer Nintendo

Publisher Nintendo



Wario Land 2 for Game Boy Color is merely a colorized version of the previously released game. So on the one hand, if you already own it there's not much reason to buy the color version. On the other hand, if you've never played WL2, you can begin looking forward to a hard-core 2D plat-

former that's both incredibly addicting and better looking than ever. It's those old-school Mario play mechanics that draw you in, along with a host of new Wario-tastic maneuvers and personas like Super Fat, Drunken, and Zombie Wario. While WL2 isn't as technically advanced as games being made specifically for the GBC, what it lacks in effects, it more than makes up for in gameplay and character design. A must-own game for GBC fans everywhere.



Grade

B-

Rating

**ARTZ**

Developer

CLGE/Planet

Publisher

Dreamworks

Why just an average score for a game with such promise? For starters, while most of the levels are fairly large, there doesn't seem to be a cohesive plan to their design, and some of the underground levels (like the opening two levels) have such a dark color palette that it's difficult to follow the action unless you're in perfect lighting conditions (and this is the GBC, after all). And while the animation is technically good, it doesn't have the fluidity of games like Tarzan, or even Super Mario Bros. DX. Still, it has all the elements of a classic platformer, and while it

breaks no new ground in light of the classics, it's still a fun romp through this movie license.

**PAC-MAN**

Developer

Namco

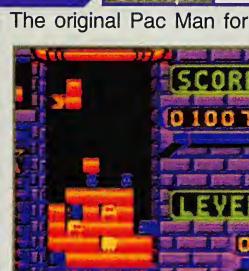
Publisher

Namco

Grade

B

Rating



The original Pac Man for Game Boy lacked only one thing: color. The GBC version adds this, but removes the full-screen map option, only showing a portion of the course and scrolling as you move. This makes planning a

route tough and may cost many lives, but it does look good. Also included is Pac Attack – a version of Tetris in which every piece is a three-segmented "L" shape and made up of a block, a monster, and/or a Pac Man. When the Pac Man piece hits, the monsters become ghosts, Pac Man eats his way through them toward the bottom, and any row filled with blocks gets eliminated. A worthy purchase.

9967548-6050FG

SURVIVAL KIDS

Developer

Konami

Publisher

Konami

Grade

B-

Rating



Survival Kids is a fairly simple and straightforward RPG with plenty of searching and puzzle-solving. You play as a kid (duh) stranded on an island, starting with nothing but a knife and the will to survive. This island is populated with plenty of wild game and one friendly monkey, and in your explorations, you'll come across many signs of other inhabitants – an old hut, burnt out fire circles, and a skeleton in a cave – but the overwhelming goal is to get off the island. Konami are pretty good about sprinkling hints throughout the game as to what to do next, but

sometimes it became tough to see where to go or what to do next. Otherwise, SK is good, clean fun.

**SMURFS' NIGHTMARE**

Grade

B

Rating



Smurfs is designed much like those SNES and Genesis games of not-so-long ago. Inside each of the Smurfs' residences, straightforward platforming takes center stage, while outside, as you meet other inhabitants of the village, racing and other task-based games take place amongst stunning backgrounds that look like the best of the 16-bit era. Although aimed directly at children, Smurfs is a solid game for anyone who can look past the kiddy theme.

Developer

Infogrames

Publisher

Infogrames



Grade

B

Rating

**SPY VS SPY**

1-2



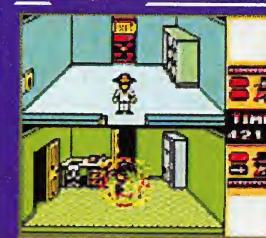
Faithful to the NES classic, you control the black or the white spy as you search through buildings for secrets and set traps for your opponent. The GBC version allows you to play against the computer or, if you have a friend with this cart and a Link Cable, go head to head to see whose espionage skills are greater. It also includes a training mode that gets you up to speed quickly. There's not a lot of eye candy in this game, but it's still just as fun as the original.

Developer

Kemco

Publisher

Kemco



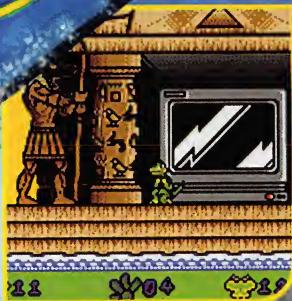
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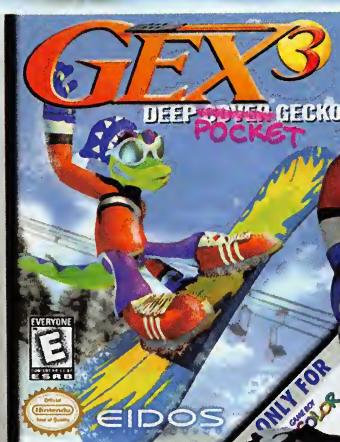
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TOP GEAR POCKET

Grade C+

Rating 1



Officially, this is the first Game Boy Color-only game, plus the first GBC title to use the Rumble Cartridge—the same technology used in Nintendo's Pokémon Pinball. In theory, this allows you to feel the engine revs and maintain better control. In reality, though, the buzzing tells very little, and the acceleration and sensation of speed is lacking. The cart eschews a memory save for that old standby, the password. There are faster cars and additional tracks to unlock as you play, but getting to the password points can seem more a chore and less a natural progression of the gameplay.

While the main thrust of this cartridge is the one-player game, there is a two-player link-up mode for additional gameplay, but the bottom line is that there's just not enough racing excitement to keep you coming back for more.

Developer Vision Works

Publisher Kemco

**BEST OF THE REST:****ASTERIODS** crave**CROC FOX****DUKE NUKEM GT INT.****GEX 3** crave**EARTHWORM JIM** crave**CODZILLA** crave**BLITZ 2000** midway**RAINBOW 6** red storm**MURKAGE** midway**TEST DRIVE 6** infogrames

Grade C+

1-2

Rating E

**ALL-STAR TENNIS**

Here comes another GB Tennis game, this time in color and Rumble-Cart equipped! Choose from many of the top players such as Michael Chang and Zoe Taylor, and have it out in one- or two-player (via link cable) Smash mode (standard tennis with singles, doubles, and tournament games), Arcade mode (try to beat all of the tennis greats!), or Bomb Tennis, which leaves a ticking bomb anywhere the ball bounces—and you don't want to be around when it goes off! Overall, the control is decent, and the variety of game types is substantial, but the computer AI isn't always what it should be, and the physics seem to be based more on pong than tennis. Still, for fans of the game, we'd say give it a try.

Developer Smart Dog

Publisher

Ubi Soft

**RATS**

Grade C+

1

Rating E



Mix equal parts classic platforming with Rodents and guns, and you've got Take 2's Rats. One of the first Game Boy Color titles, Rats is also compatible with the old black and white model, so other than color there's little innovation here to celebrate. What Rats does serve up is a mazy side scrolling action shooter—a fun eye-hand coordination romp that'll suffice on a short flight, or as an entry level game for younger players.

Developer Tarantula Studios

Publisher Take 2 Interactive



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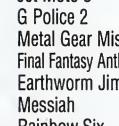
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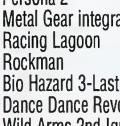
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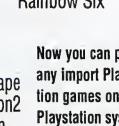
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Dragon Quest VII \$19/Ea



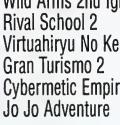
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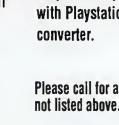
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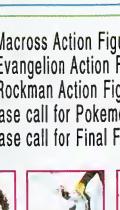


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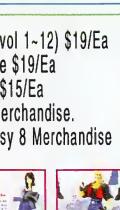
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NEO GEO POCKET COLOR



Rating



Developer

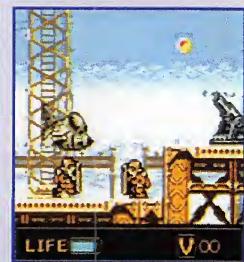
METAL SLUG FIRST MISSION

SNK

Publisher

SNK

SNK have provided a wickedly fun miniaturized version of their acclaimed arcade side-scroller Metal Slug. Aptly titled Metal Slug: First Mission, this portable installment offers the same great classic gameplay as its arcade brethren. Your mission: infiltrate the enemy force's storage facility, burn it down, and capture the evil Colonel Bildegaard. To help you along the way, an assortment of vehicles will be made available, including the eponymous SD tank. First Mission is a testament to the Neo Geo Pocket Color's graphical integrity, which up until this point has not been fully demonstrated. Meticulously animated, it captures the nuances that made the MS series such a memorable gaming experience, ensuring its place in anyone's Pocket library.



KING OF FIGHTERS R2



Developer

SNK

Publisher

SNK



Although King of Fighters R2 uses deformed characters to squeeze into the small screen of the Neo Geo Pocket Color, its characters impressively mimic the likeness and movement of their arcade counterparts. The control is precise; all the special moves you already know can be easily executed. Pat-

terned after KOF '98, this miniature version includes the advantage system and character roulette, as well as Making, a technique through which hidden moves are discovered to enhance characters' power. Not only can a wider range of attacks be executed, but offense becomes more intuitive as well. Once you've taught your fighter an array of moves, a training mode can be played to improve your skills even more.

9967548-6050FG

SAMURAI SPIRITS 2



Games like Samurai Spirits 2 are why the future of this pint-sized console looks so promising. While the Neo Geo Pocket has its limitations, it seems that every move and animation has been preserved from the original Samurai Spirits – you couldn't ask for a better translation. Joining the honorable Samurai cast are new combatants Asura, Shinzan, Hakkau and Shal-

rot, and through constant battle, the fighters can learn new moves and special attacks while strengthening each move to ultimate form. By completing every game mode, characters receive an official graphic card, which can be saved and displayed at a later time. Be careful of the two-player link-cable mode; it's intensely addictive.



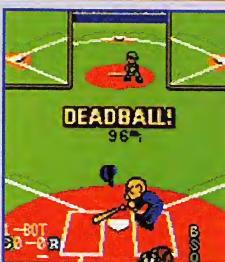
NEO BASEBALL STARS COLOR

Developer

SNK

Publisher

SNK



The monstrously entertaining arcade classic Baseball Stars may have been squeezed into a smaller package, but this interpretation of the Neo Geo giant retains all its fun and trademark style. Don't expect all the complexity we've come to expect in today's baseball games, but do expect a surprisingly sound take on the sport: create your own team, track stats, and enjoy the celebratory animation cuts and wide list of player animations. The graphics are remarkably tight, in the same exaggerated style (but not quite Jikkyou Pro territory) as the original Baseball Stars.



CRUSH ROLLER

Grade

B+

1-2

Rating



About when Pac Man hit arcades, there was also a nearly forgotten clone called Crush Roller, with a similar premise: clear the screen, avoid the baddies, and get rid of them when you can. Instead of a disc eating dots, you're a paintbrush painting streets in several neighborhoods. Your foes are simply called "monsters," and they come in four colors and speeds. While Crush Roller doesn't have any powerups that allow you to go after the monsters, each screen does have one or two brush rollers that turbo you down a straightaway, and if any monster finds itself in your path, CRUSH! Sure, you can now play Pac Man on the Neo Pocket, but check out this lost classic as well.

Developer

ADK

Publisher

SNK



POCKET TENNIS

Grade

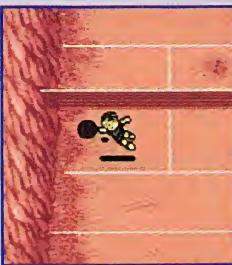
B

1-2

Rating



In all its simplicity, Pocket Tennis still has the playability of an 8-bit title – try Tennis on NES



to find this game's replica. Coming to grips with the gameplay is easy: one button lobs, the other smashes, and the direction of the shot is a matter of basic proximity. When you're ready to take your skills to the five courts, choose from a selection of eight characters, whose abilities vary. You can compete in tournaments or exhibition, and when you've mastered the metronome gameplay, a listing of results can be saved for the record mode. While there isn't much animation—diving for balls is as flashy as it gets—Pocket Tennis' bare-bones formula suits a portable system quite well.

9967548-6050FG

PUZZLE BOBBLE MINI

Grade

B+

1-2

Rating



A hand-held system without a puzzle game would be as peculiar as Hollywood without excessive pretense. With the wildly addictive Puzzle Bobble bursting its way into SNK's initial crop of titles, the Neo Geo Pocket Color has a classic puzzle game to fill out its lineup. This basic version of the repeatedly updated series takes the simple link-and-explode-the-colored-orbs gameplay and translates it to the handheld medium. Bub and Bob return in their starring roles, cranking the crossbow back and forth, and the color graphics serve their purpose admirably. Between this and the mighty Puyo Pop, the Neo Pocket has handheld puzzle gaming staked out for the coming season.

Developer

SNK

Publisher

SNK



NEO TURF MASTER

Grade

B

1-2

Rating



Neo Turf Masters is SNK's answer to big-headed golf, à la Hot Shots and Mario Golf. At first glance the SNK

offering seems to come up a little short – there's only six players to choose from, and

only three courses. However, the graphics, music, and characters are up to SNK's standards of quality, and have kept us logging many hours with this game trying to beat the Tournament mode in order to win the crown. And the two-player vs. mode (available through a link cable) awards the winner of each match one of 18 special sets of clubs, which give you special abilities on subsequent VS matches. SNK has pulled off another addictive sports game aimed at the sports-minded and sports-impaired alike! Now, if you'll excuse us, FORE!



JAPAN

BEST OF IMPORTS '99

With more and more Japanese games making their way to America, thanks in no small part to the Sony revolution, the amount of A and B titles exclusive to Japan are thinning out as we approach the tail end of the N64 and PS's reign. Still, imports continue to pave the way for much of the U.S. gaming scene. As was the case with the Saturn and PlayStation, the import scene here in America will undoubtedly swell again as early adopters clamor for the latest Dreamcast wares and future PS2 DVDs from Japan. The year 2000 will likely be one of the biggest ever for the import video game trade, especially if U.S. consumers can find a way to adapt import games for play on their U.S. systems. Something tells me that somewhere in a lab in Hong Kong an 80-lb. guy with an overbite and 2-inch-thick glasses is working on it right now. For the discerning import buff and hardcore gamers everywhere who can't rest until each and every banner import is sitting in his CD rack, here's a bunch of '99 games you shouldn't let slip by.

Japan-only and worth owning!

THE ADVENTURES OF LITTLE RALPH

Developer New Corp.

Publisher New Corp.

The Adventures of Little Ralph offers an old-school 2D romp that, if not for its short nature, would be quite a sensation had side-scrollers not



0991725-0019AU

died an untimely death. Great looking art, excellent animation, lots of misty transparencies and effects – it's all here. The action is comprised almost entirely of fairly straightforward run, jump, dodge and attack gameplay, but the settings and situations change enough to keep things moving along swiftly. Developers New Corporation pull out every timing trick in the book along with a frantic mining cart ride right out of Marvel Land, vertical descents while under waves of attackers, icy floors amongst swinging obstacles, and falling, moving, and disappearing platforms. Then when you least expect it, the boss fighting takes place in classic 2D fashion complete with Street Fighter-esque moves and traditional blocking. One of only a few 2D games released in '99, Ralph's a real find if you're looking in that direction.

BANGAIO

Developer Treasure

Publisher ESP

With only 10,000 copies available for distribution in Japan in light of a Dreamcast version hitting in November, Bangaio for the N64 will undoubtedly be in short supply stateside. So, the question for N64 import game players everywhere: is Treasure's manic shooter worth tracking down and perhaps paying a hefty sum for? Well, if there's no Dreamcast in the house, the answer would have to be a resounding "yes." Pure, raw firepower is what Bangaio is all about, along with some exploration and strategic elements, and it is in these areas that the game breaks new ground. Never have we seen so much happening onscreen with nary a hint of slowdown. And to drive it all home, the explosions crackle with the intensity of a live 4th of July display. If you're into shooters and/or classic gameplay, Bangaio is by all means worth

owning. It may be hard to find, but we think you'll find it well worth the effort.

**EVANGELION**

Developer Bandai

Publisher Bandai

Arguably the greatest TV anime series ever created, *Neon Genesis Evangelion* has finally spawned a game that's not a digital comic! Rather,



Evangelion for the Nintendo 64 is a hybrid fighting/action/reflex/music (!?) game, and if you're a fan of the series, this is one of '99's best import finds. The gameplay is simple yet complex, mirroring each TV episode, and the battles that ensue, along with such memorable moments as Shinji and Asuka's amazing tandem assault, are set to classical music in *Genesis 0:5*. Bandai is to be commended for capturing the essence of Evangelion in a video game. The only thing missing is "Fly Me to the Moon," the original closing theme as sung by Frank Sinatra. Otherwise, everything a fan could possibly want is in here. It takes a little while to grasp if you don't know Japanese, but it's well worth taking the time to learn. A truly unique and highly collectible Nintendo 64 game.

INTERNAL SECTION

Developer Positron

Publisher Square

This oddball Japanese shooter from Positron and Square resembles something like a graphic designer's revisionist take on Tempest and



N2O. Internal Section's a unique-looking game in which you travel down a straight, web-like tunnel, your ship represented as a morphing crystal, changing shape when you change weapons (which are based on the animals of the Chinese Zodiac). Beyond the tube, broad swaths of intricate rotating patterns and bizarre flat-shaded objects and structures swirl around and fly past you. Dolphins, crystals, fan-like sheets and, in one motif, line representations of unspeakable fluids populate the periphery. You won't find lens flares or any of that sort of nonsense, just a clean, 60-frames dose of millennial psychedelia. IS is a very simple game. There are no power-ups, and unlimited continues sap any real challenge from it, but that's not really the point.

METAL SLUG 2

Developer Nazca

Publisher SNK

In a world pressed for millions of colors, billions of polygons, and a bazillion bit counts, the standards of what can be perceived as an A+ game will forever change with the advancement of technology. With this in mind, it's refreshing to see developers throw technology out the window and focus on why we play games in the first place—fun. Enter SNK and Metal Slug 2, a classic side-scrolling action/platform shooter, candy coated in what amounts to be one of the most ingeniously original game franchises released this decade. Built off the same formula for fun found in the original, MS2 is a display of devotion, love and art in motion while staying true to its lineage. MS2 comes packed with all the required additions a sequel needs: new weaponry, new vehicles, addition-

al characters, and an extra helping of "love" from the designers at SNK.

**MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM**

Developer Bandai

Publisher Bandai



Bandai's come through and actually delivered a decent Gundam game. Mobile Suit Gundam: Char's Counter Attack features vaguely Virtual On-ish, anime-like battles in deep space starring a good selection of mechs culled from the huge Gundam series. The classic RX-78 type Gundam is represented, as is the

newer RX-93 V-type, facing off against Char's Zaku and Gelgoog, along with Gyunei Gus' Jagd Doga. The first thing that strikes one about MSG:CCA is the production quality, as you are greeted with a great looking intro combining CG and nicely shaded animation cels. This goodwill continues into the solid gameplay, which consists of straightforward fighting, with each character wielding a healthy selection of long and short-range weapons. You can swing swords, fire bazookas, and even launch dummies of your mech to fool the opponents' lock-on weapons. Through story or battle mode, the action remains fast and playable.

0991725-0019AU

0991725-0019AU/ PlayStation all soft '99

0991725-0019AU/ PlayStation all soft '99

PEPSIMAN

Rating



Developer

Kid

Publisher

Kid

When those Pepsi machines run dry and the people begin to riot as a result, who you gonna call? Yep, there's now a game where the goal is to



quench thirst, and it's branded like a pig in Oscar Mayers pen: the jewel case, the CD and the game is plastered, as one would imagine, with Pepsi, Pepsi, and more Pepsi. Actually, the game itself isn't half bad. As the environments whisk by, Pepsiman must avoid all manner of obsta-

cles by jumping, dodging, and sliding to reach his goal. Of course, as the game progresses the courses get more complex, to include motor vehicles, semis, homes to invade, two-way traffic, huge holes in the street, construction zones, and other such perilous hazards. There are even cheesy Pepsi commercials and segues, featuring some no-name dork in splendid FMV. The game spans three cities – San Francisco, New York, and Pepsi City (don't ask) – and one state, Texas. Hey, it's an import, maybe they think Texas is just a big city. Why does this game exist, you ask? Heck, we don't know, why do people listen to N-Sync? It's a strange, strange world. Collectors item? No doubt about it.

0991725-0019AU :

POP N' TANKS

Rating



Developer

Enix

Publisher

Enix

Pop'n Tanks is everything you could possibly want in a one-on-one action/shooting game. Instantly recognizable as one of the game's best resources is its intuitive camera. Tracking the action fluidly, changing pace in perfect harmony with your every move, it couldn't be more refined. The environmental effects help drive the action too, as ducking behind obstacles causes them to go temporarily transparent. But the many tanks themselves are the game's main attraction. Loaded with as much bubbly anime-style personality as their pilots (guess that's why they're poppin'), each bounces into action with all of the vigor that a certain Tiny Tank could never muster. Within minutes of your first campaign,

we guarantee you'll be hooked on Pop'n Tanks. Surrounding all of this good fun, Enix has gone as far as outfitting the game with highly polished anime cinemas as well, suggesting the possibility of a series or perhaps an animated feature in the years to come. Perhaps these tanks will pop again on PS2. Time will tell.

**ROBOT DANDY**

Rating



Developer

Human

Publisher

Human

If you're a fan of *Gigantor*, *Giant Robo*, or the recent *Iron Giant*, Human has surprisingly designed a game with you in mind. Robot Dandy is one of the best reasons to buy an import game this year. Even with the U.S. PlayStation library bursting at the seams, there is nothing like Dandy available on any platform, and probably never will be. Playing as Mamoru, you assume complete control (remote



control via the PlayStation pad) of a skyscraper-high giant robot. Toggling between Mamoru and Vodan via the select button, as Mamoru you're able to run about freely amidst gigantic cityscapes, getting in the position of your choice to guide Vodan through each mission. The true-to-life dimensions of the environments help provide an uncanny sense of realism and the sensation of actually controlling a massive robot. Administered with sheer perfection, Hudson is to be commended for their effort. There's nothing quite like standing 50 to 100 yards away and guiding a 150-foot-tall giant robot into battle.

ナゾトキ



NINTENDO 64 Y2K

preview

EARTHBOUND 64

The Mother series' one foray into the American market, EarthBound on the SNES, received mixed reviews overall, but fans universally agreed that it was very different from the norm. EarthBound 64 is as off-the-wall as its predecessors, but it's fully 3D, and multiple characters can undertake the quest. The setting is hard to peg, though, with seeming influences from both sci-fi and the Wild West.

Developer

Nintendo

Publisher

Nintendo



MARIO PARTY 2

Mario Party seemed to inspire love-it-or-hate-it reactions, but those who hated it probably didn't have any friends to play with. The sequel will obviously contain the entire classic cast of characters, plus an even broader array of mini-games for them to compete and/or cooperate in. Shut-in, reclusive types will avoid it like the plague, but social butterflies will find this tailor-made for them.

Developer

Hudson

Publisher

Nintendo



MINI RACERS

Rare's RC Pro-Am lives, in the form of this spiritual successor. The isometric, Super-Sprinty gameplay is now married to real-time 3D graphics in Mini Racers. Like any N64 racer worth its salt, Mini will offer four-player split-screen racing in a number of expansive environments, and if you don't like the stock tracks, you can go ahead and build your own in the edit mode.

Developer

Nintendo

Publisher

Nintendo



PERFECT DARK

A terrible cry was heard in the land when Rare's GoldenEye followup was put off until April 2000, but the delay will make for a better game, and such quality is worth any wait. Perfect Dark will feature FPS gameplay beyond even 007, with much-improved enemy AI, an intriguing sci-fi setting, brand-new weapons, and four-player deathmatches to consume hour upon hour.

Developer

Rare

Publisher

Nintendo



KIRBY 64

Ah, Kirby. Hal Labs' perpetually hungry puffball creation will venture forth once again in this 2.5D platformer, searching for new things to inhale and expectorate. Kirby 64, despite being fully polygonal, adheres to the Hal tradition of cute, cartoony design; friends and foes both seem so charming that they're hard to distinguish. But then Kirby eats anything, so perhaps that's not a problem.

Developer

Hal Labs

Publisher

Nintendo



MARIO RPG 2

Shigeru Miyamoto only had a tangential involvement with this project, but he was the source of Mario RPG's most innovative element, the superimposition of Colorformy hand-drawn characters on 3D backgrounds. The result looks lovely, and the gameplay (where you can build up Mario's capabilities until he becomes Super Mario) should grab RPG diehards and casual fans alike.

Developer

Nintendo

Publisher

Nintendo



ZELDA CRADEN

This all-new adventure looks as golden as its predecessor. Link will adventure into a dying parallel world, where a great clock counts down to the apocalypse he must fight to avert. A new gameplay element is the use of special masks. These change Link into monsters with special abilities, which he can use to solve puzzles and accomplish platforming challenges.

Developer

Nintendo

Publisher

Nintendo



ADDITIONAL Y2K TITLES

Ogre Battle

Tarzan

Spiderman

Eternal Darkness

Turok 3

Shadow Man 2

Batman Animated

Hype: the Time Quest

Viewpoint 2064

Metroid 64?



PLAYSTATION

**Preview
Y2K**

CHRONO CROSS

Developed by ex-Xenogears team members, but bearing a strong stylistic resemblance to Brave Fencer Musashiden, this 3D action-RPG allows you to play as one of two different characters. You carry out the same quest in either persona, but they come up with entirely different solutions to puzzles. The graphics are clean and sharp, with a cartoony but engaging quality to them.

Developer Squaresoft

Publisher Squaresoft



KOULDELKA

The tale of this 3D horror adventure has been rather peculiar. Koudelka's ex-Square developers signed on with SNK as their publisher - a strange choice, considering SNK's arcade focus. Getting past the trivial musings, Koudelka should be an intriguing game, very heavy on atmosphere and an enigmatic mystery plot, with beautiful character designs expressed in finely crafted CG.

Developer Sacnthon

Publisher SNK



SPIDERMAN

Coming off the success of Tony Hawk Pro Skater, Neversoft is shifting gears to produce this wall-crawling 3D adventure. Peter Parker will take on all his classic foes, and if we had our way, he'd go after some of the lesser-known ones; what of Stilt-Man and the Trapster? Either way, the look and feel of the game should be faithful to the comic.

Developer Neversoft

Publisher Activision



VAGRANT STORY

An oddity, this one. A demonstration of Vagrant Story appeared earlier in 1999, but not a playable one. The game on display felt like an interactive 3D comic, with speech balloons holding the dialogue and a complex plot. The final version will be much more playable, though. It's been described by some as a medieval Metal Gear, with strategic 3D action and a cinematic presentation.

Developer Square

Publisher Squaresoft



DRAGON VORL

Long in development, Namco's 3D action-RPG made a striking debut at the fall TGS. It sports great 3D graphics, and the action is fast in running battles with mundane enemies and epic conflicts with huge dragons. Like Phantasy Star III, the story spans generations; what you do in one character's life will affect the next leg of the plot, starring their descendants.

Developer Namco

Publisher Namco



LEGEND OF MANA

Fans have clamored for this sequel since the days of the SNES, and now Square has delivered in spades, creating a game with the flat-out most beautiful hand-drawn graphics ever seen in a videogame. It's like stepping into an interactive cartoon: the backgrounds and characters are wonderfully colorful and detailed. The real-time action, meanwhile, is as smooth as ever.

Developer Square

Publisher Squaresoft



TOMBA 2

The pink-haired caveman will set forth once again in the year 2000, to wreak more havoc upon the ranks of evil pig-kind. The same developers are in charge (Whoopiee Camp, veterans of Capcom's classic Ghouls 'n' Ghosts platformers), but unlike the original Tomba, which partially held to the old 2D sprite tradition, Tomba 2 will be rendered entirely in 3D, even the characters.

Developer Whoopiee Camp

Publisher Sony



ADDITIONAL Y2K TITLES

Indiana Jones
Danger Girl
Test Drive Cycles
Motocross Madness
Prince of Persia 3D

Jumping Flash 3
Final Fantasy IX
Chrono Cross
Saga Frontier
Dew Prism



PLAYSTATION 2: Y2K

THE BOUNCER

Dream Factory stunned gamers with their *Tobal* series on PS, and they're setting out to do the same thing on PS2. *The Bouncer* is aiming to exhilarate players with its highly cinematic battles and action set pieces overflowing with special effects. Preliminary footage has revealed highly directed action and solid, creative fighting.

Developer Dream Factory

Publisher Square



DEN SEN

This unusual action title from Sony Computer Entertainment International casts you as a young girl whose main mode of locomotion is sliding along power lines with a coat hanger (don't try this at home kids). That's about all we know thus far about *Den-Sen*, but we can say with confidence that this one is certainly unique.

Developer SCEI

Publisher SCEI



KESSEN

Koei's never been known as a graphic powerhouse, but they're looking to make use of the PS2's raw horsepower to deliver a new level of strategic conflict. Capitalizing on Koei's expertise in designing compelling strategy games, *Kessen* ups the ante by depicting clashes in amazing, *Braveheart*-like real time sequences featuring dozens and dozens of warring troops fighting it out.

Developer KOEI

Publisher KOEI



POPOLOCROIS III

Dubbed by Sony as an "Anime Chick Romantic Role Playing Game," *Popolocrois III* is distinguished by its amazing-looking real-time characters. Though they may appear to be hand drawn, cel-type images in still pictures, they are actually rendered on the fly and feature proper shading and perspective. As for the particulars of the game itself, those are still a bit of a mystery.

Developer SCEI

Publisher SCEI



PREVIEW

Y2K

DARK CLOUD

A new system must launch with an RPG of some sort, and the PS2 will get *Dark Cloud*. Sony's so-called Georama Role Playing Game allows you to create environments on a simple overhead map and immediately fly into them and begin moving around within your original creation. Of course, *Dark Cloud* will feature truly next-generation imagery, including an eerily realistic water effect.

Developer SCEI

Publisher SCEI

SCEI



GRAN TURISMO 2000

Ever since the massive success of the original *Gran Turismo*, it has been a foregone conclusion that the next Sony system would have a next-generation update, and here it is. Set to launch with the PS2, *GT2000* should deliver more of the classic *Gran Turismo* thrills, albeit wrapped in a super shiny wrapper.

Developer Polyphony

Publisher SCEI

SCEI



NEW RIDGE RACER

In a wholly welcome case of history repeating itself, Namco is bringing *Ridge Racer* to Sony's new hardware. The tentatively titled *New Ridge Racer* shows with stunning force how far technology has advanced, as we finally get realistic looking trees and cars with so much detail you can even see brake calipers tucked away behind the blur of the wheel's spokes.

Developer Namco

Publisher Namco

Namco



TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT

Even without the unprecedented level of graphics waiting to be had in Namco's *Tekken Tag Tournament*, gamers would still have plenty to cheer about. The ability to call in a second character at any time greatly shakes up the *Tekken* formula, allowing for multi-character juggles and throws the likes of which the series has never had before.

Developer Namco

Publisher Namco

Namco





DREAMCAST Y2K

Preview

CRAZY TAXI

Crazy Taxi has taken longer than one might expect to make its way from the Naomi to the Dreamcast, but when you think about it, there can be only one explanation: console-exclusive levels. Also on our wish list: new cars and music (lots more music). Even if all our little dreams don't come true, though, this should be a killer driving experience.

Developer

Sega AM3

Publisher

Sega



DEAD OR ALIVE 2

Scattered glimpses of this game on test in major arcades have resulted in uniformly rave reviews. DOA2 features massive 3D fighting arenas, gorgeous Naomi-powered character graphics, and gameplay further refined from the original's fast back-and-forth system. We now cross our fingers, hoping for console-exclusive costumes, as well as the return of the infamous Bounce.

Developer

Tecmo

Publisher

Tecmo



ETERNAL ARCADIA

This is what RPG fans have been waiting to see on the Dreamcast: a fully-3D Japanese-style adventure with quality designs and a reliable pedigree. Created by the team responsible for the 16-bit Phantasy Star series, Eternal Arcadia features an amazing fantasy world, dotted by huge aerial battleships. The battles show off lovely 3D magical attacks, accompanied by explosive lighting effects.

Developer

Sega

Publisher

Sega



FLOGIAN BROTHERS

Flogian Brothers caught some flack from critics early on, mainly on account of its name (c'mon, it is silly). When it moves closer to the public eye, though, the game proper will probably silence the hecklers; its graphics are stunning, and among the staff is Nick Jones, formerly of Shiny, a lead programmer on the classic Earthworm Jim.

Developer

Visual Concepts

Publisher

Sega



FURBALLS

For folks previously acclaimed for their F1 sims, the gentlemen at Bizarre Creations seem to have a deep well of deranged genius within them, waiting to be tapped. Furballs received naught but thumbs-up from ECTS-goers, who loved the idea of becoming a cute anthropomorphic critter and wasting their fellow furries with heavy weapons. Puzzle-solving elements should stretch out and break up the action.

Developer

Bizarre Creations

Publisher

Acclaim



RESIDENT EVIL C.V.

The news that Code: Veronica would be developed by Sega received a positive reaction; if Capcom had to send it out-of-house, they made a good choice. This fully 3D RE sidestory features zombie models that look great (especially when you blow their limbs off) and a moving camera, adding a nice cinematic feel. The environments compare well to the PlayStation's pre-rendered backgrounds.

Developer

Sega

Publisher

Capcom



SHEN MUE

What can we say that hasn't already been repeated? Yu Suzuki's epic adventure is undoubtedly the most ambitious game ever attempted, and seems guaranteed to become a classic, if only he can gather his vision together into a coherent whole. Pessimism aside, though, we still eagerly await the opportunity to experience what Suzuki has in store (and play some Space Harrier).

Developer

Sega AM2

Publisher

Sega



SPACE CHANNEL 5

Imagine the planning meetings at Sega. "Nights 2?" "Nah." "Burning Rangers? That one could use an update." "No way." "How about a goofy sci-fi dancing game with freaked-out techno music, neon-colored aliens and a chick in an orange Jetsons outfit?" "Green-light that sucker!" Seriously, Space Channel should provide wicked dancing fun for fans of Bust-a-Groove (and who didn't love that one?).

Developer

Sega

Publisher

Sega



The Wild West Was Never this Wild!

Do you have what it takes shoot and slice your way through 10 action-packed levels and become the "Super Ultra Sexy Hero"? Rising Zan: The Samurai Gunman takes you back to the wild west of 1800's where, armed with only a gun, Katana sword, and some ultra sexy moves, you'll face a town full of the meanest, ugliest and weirdest hombres you've ever seen.

As you fight your way through this "sushi western" you'll solve puzzles, play mini-games, deal with bizarre and deadly bosses, and earn those ever important "sexy points" you'll need to become the "Super Ultra Sexy Hero"!

- Lots of 3rd person cut'em up and shoot'em up ultra super sexy action
- Use your six gun, Katana sword, or sexy combos to wipe out the bad guys
- Outrageous mini-games to play and puzzles to solve
- Hidden levels and characters
- Weird and bizarre enemies around every corner

"Quirky, offbeat, unusual, bizarre, odd, strange, peculiar..."
-PSExtreme

PlayStation!




MATURE
M

age tec



"...quirky like no other game we've ever come across"

- Next Generation

"...the sort of over-the-top anime slash-'em up the action genre has needed..."
-Official PlayStation Magazine

"This game seems to have it all...."
-PSM

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age tec.com



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2000 PROJECTIONS

DRIVE HALVERSON



In the year 2000... First of all, according to all of the sci-fi I grew up on, by now cars should be flyin' and we should all be wearing government-issue uniforms with v-necks. As far as gaming goes I was hoping for holograms by now, but I'll settle for these humble revelations: Here's how I see 2000 going down. By next Christmas, prior to the PlayStation 2 launch, Sega will be closing in on, or be just beyond, the two-million mark, the magic number that third parties will be looking for to ramp up development. And just in the nick of time... The PlayStation 2 will already be big with early adopters and the gaming press, as import gamers suck up Japanese units and games beginning in March. As the U.S. debut draws near, Sega will drop to \$149.99 but it won't affect the Sony blitzkrieg and the PS2 will launch at \$299.99 and sell one million units in its first 60 days. Meanwhile, the Nintendo Dolphin will have been shown at E3 2000, most likely on video only, and prove to be the most powerful new system. It won't surface until 2001, but when it does, at \$99.99 it will become the largest-selling console in the history of gaming. Further bolstering their position, Nintendo and Konami's new handheld venture will revolutionize portable gaming and communication and will be a huge success for both companies. Pokemon on a next-generation handheld will send kids into convulsions nationwide. They'll begin spray-painting their hamsters yellow, walking in circles and talking gibberish. Should Castlevania return to its 2D roots on the new system, old-school gamers will follow suit, without the hamster part.

And, finally, if Bill dare invade the sanctity of console gaming, the Microsoft home console will, if nothing else, free PC games from their ball and chain (mouse and keyboard) and begin to corner the online gaming market, thusly saving the console industry from itself. Because the one thing that could screw up the whole works is if companies began turning away from the hardcore players who got us to this point and started producing a bunch of "community games" online. While I feel online gaming will be a big part of gaming's future, I think it needs to become so in addition to the tried and true formulas that we've embraced for so long. The industry itself needs to grow. More development teams will need to be added to company rosters to keep up with the demand for new genres.

Of course, as a result of all of this quality entertainment Americans will continue to get fatter and dumber until Warren Beatty is elected President and launches a nationwide fitness campaign...an intern in every home to work our bones!

My early favorite for breakthrough title of 2000? Furballs. Cute little critters - big ass guns. Sounds like a marriage made in heaven to me.



BRADY FIECHTER



The predictions have already been made: Sony's new monster will trample anything in its path. Presumptuous and irresponsible to say so soon? Perhaps. But after finally seeing PlayStation 2 in motion, anyone who loves video games will want nothing more than to have the DVD-based powerhouse complimenting his home entertainment center.

Indeed, I was dazzled by what I saw on PlayStation 2, and the prospects of the future are exciting, but my enthusiasm for the coming year is generated most intensely from Nintendo and the possible emergence of Dolphin. While Nintendo's next hardware is currently nothing more than an obscure name and a dubious list of specs, the likelihood that the first game on the system will come from the mind of Miyamoto elicits a resonance that can't be ignored.

With all the talk of new technology, it's easy to overlook what current hardware has in store. Games like Mario RPG 2, Zelda Gaiden, and Namco's Dragon Valor are all showing signs of something truly special, and I'd rather have any of these in my possession now than anything currently shown on PlayStation 2

and Dreamcast; polygon power means nothing to me when a Zelda or hand-drawn art style is in the picture.

Now that Shenmue has fallen back to a spring release, Sega's future in Japan is starting to sink from uncertain to critical. Even with Shenmue, Code Veronica is the only game I'm anticipating with any appreciable level of enthusiasm. If Sega's Dreamcast fades permanently into the background, so be it: in the end, all I want from the year 2000 is a healthy crop of memorable games - no matter which system they're on.





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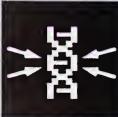
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For official rules or to register go to www.gamestop.com.

0991725-0019AU/ Playstation all soft '99

MIKE HOBBS



Any look into the year 2000 must begin with some thoughts on Sony's hugely anticipated PlayStation 2. Unimaginative name aside, there is little doubt that PS2 will mesmerize gamers and the general populace alike with its stunning polygon handling and DVD capability. The big question is whether or not Sony can sell a substantial number of systems at its Japanese launch price of 39,800 Yen (roughly \$390 dollars at the current exchange rate). Most are counting on the bullet-proof Sony name to push the first million units out the door with ease, but an American launch must see a price nearer 200 dollars if it is to have any chance in this continent. And by the time the system launches here next year (perhaps towards the end of 2000), the Dreamcast could conceivably be closer to 150 dollars.

But that may all be academic, as Sega's next-generation system is seen as something of a failure in Japan, and without full Japanese support, the machine will surely flounder. To make matters worse, Sega's best shot at a system shifting game, *Shenmue*, has been delayed to 2000, dangerously close to the launch of the PS2. Moreover, the current and future software library just doesn't appear to be quite exciting enough to compete with the potential of Sony's sexier, seemingly far more powerful machine. Obviously, the quality of the software that will be initially unleashed on the PS2 is a big unknown, but support will be there without a doubt. There are already reports of developers cooling their heels

on DC development to wait for PS2.

Now, I love Sega and their games, and the Dreamcast will certainly be host to some classic gaming experiences (joining Sonic and *Soul Calibur*), but they are once again in a difficult uphill battle. They can't survive many more. About all Sega can hope for now is massive U.S. success, but this seems to me to be almost a double-edge sword in terms of content, and their lack of direction thus far with the DC network capability hints at their past, numerous missteps. And after Nintendo's *Dolphin*, which is rumored to be an order of magnitude more powerful than the PS2, it will sadly all be over for the DC. Prove me wrong Sega, for your sake.



DRIVE SMITH



As far as videogames go, when one thinks about the next year, two letters and a numeral immediately spring to mind. Not Y-2-K, but P-S-2. Sony's new console may cost an arm and a leg and Bob-knows-what-else, but I estimate being able to play *Gran Turismo 2000* and watch my *Trigun* DVDs on the same lethal black box will be worth every penny. Then again, we geeks are ever vulnerable to the hype behind new hardware; once reality sets in, I think it's safe to say that my Dreamcast will gather no dust in the months to come. The initial shock of the launch has come and gone, but the second wave is on the way, including the first quality RPGs and the beefed-up arcade ports. *Eternal Arcadia* is knocking my socks off sight-barely-seen, and the anticipation for stuff like *Crazy Taxi*, *DEAD OR ALIVE 2*, and *Virtual On 2* is becoming difficult to suppress.

Speaking of *Virtual On 2*, time to climb up to the pulpit and feel my priesthood coming on. Sega, I say unto thee, render unto me network gaming in the year 2000 – preferably the first half of the year 2000, lest the wrath of an angry market be visited upon thee, and the scourge of PlayStation 2 smite thee to the dust of the earth, amen. But seriously, net play is the reason to buy *Rally 2* and *Oratorio Tangram*. I already have a computer to download

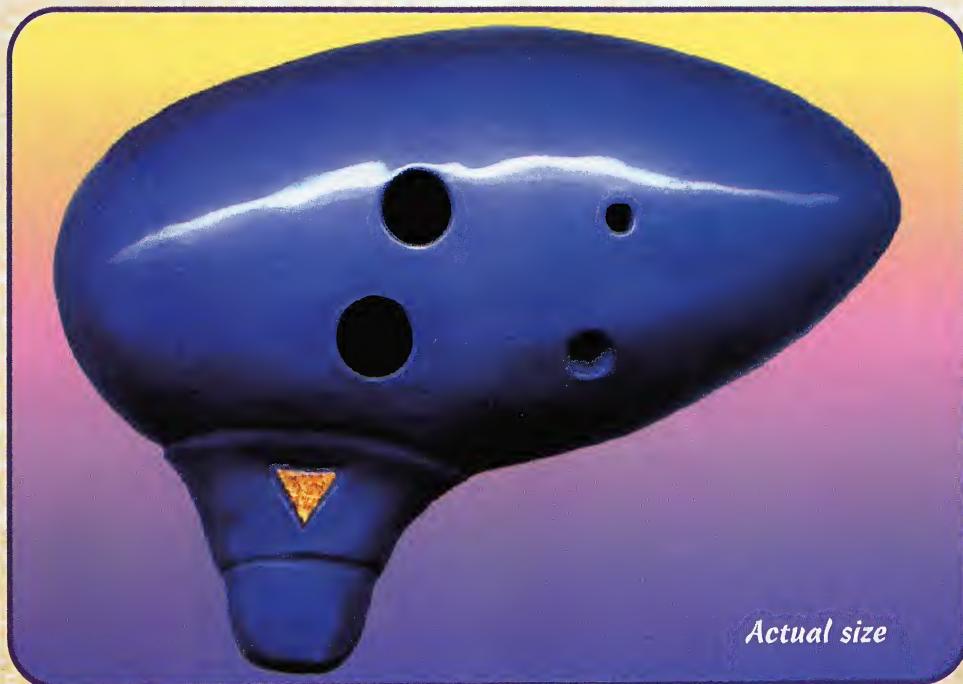
bulls*** and lies off the web with. The world needs to know that my Subaru Impreza and I can kick its tail, anywhere, any time.

Well, there's another geekish failing, our tendency to get fixated on certain things. Even if I don't get to play *Rally* over the net next year, I'll find something to do with my time. The more I think about E3 2000, the more I'm afraid to go there, considering the amount of total insanity that'll be on display. Sega will have its second generation, Sony's booth will be like TGS on speed, and ten will get you twenty that Nintendo spoils things with the next incarnation of Mario. Or, I dunno, maybe what they're saying now is right, and Bill Gates will just swoop in and try to buy everything. Say what you like about that last option, but you've got to admit, at least it would keep things from getting boring.



Y2K

THIS OCARINA'S FOR REAL!



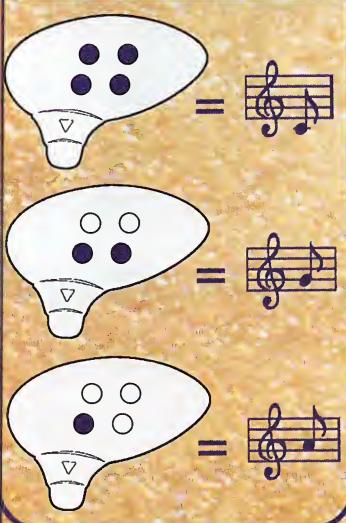
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THE OCARINA INSPIRED BY THE VIDEO GAME "THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE OCARINA OF TIME" IS NOW AVAILABLE!

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TOM STRATTON



If the world doesn't come to an end due to some bible-code prophecy, the most consequential and anticipated change will be the evolving AI and innovations in play mechanics. When reflecting on Sony's library of games, it's sad to see a scrap yard of sequels that provide little in innovation, only better textures. Granted, the hardware bound developers to limited abilities, but still it seemed those who looked past the box found games like Beatmania, PaRappa the Rapper, Klayman Klayman and Skullmonkeys, each refreshing and unique in presentation and execution. Of course, updates like Final Fantasy VIII and Soul Reaver are the exception.

For once I'm excited to see updates of sports games that have been stuck in the sea of mediocrity. To see EA return to elite status would be reason alone to celebrate. They have some tough competition: Radical and Sega Sports are already demonstrating a strong and growing presence. Speaking of Sega Sports, I'm the self-elected No. 1 fan and supporter of Visual Concepts. Knowing what they have planned for their football and basketball updates in 2000 scares me, as I'm sure it does other sports developers. It goes without saying the arrival of the Dreamcast version of World Series Baseball causes involuntary twitches, for like the NFL and NBA games,

it will become a productivity killer.

On the PlayStation and PS2, all I can think about are Gran Turismo 2 and GT2000. The games are so far beyond current levels of gameplay. To know I'll get both in less than a year still doesn't register with the logical part of my brain, and the emotional portion is hitting the apex through my libido.

For the past few years, horror games have reigned as staples in the video game diet. In 2000, I'm eager to see humor replace the gore. Monkeytropolis and Visual Concepts are already starting the revolution. My biggest disappointment for 2000 is that we will never get another Neverhood game. Thinking about it makes me want to cry.



MIKE PUCCINI



Microsoft, not content to have just a smidgen of the \$8 billion video game industry, will officially throw its hat into the hardware ring and unveil their new set-top, multi-purpose box with an impressive lineup of software titles. The unit will launch during the holiday season.

Sony launches PS2 and makes people forget that they bought a Dreamcast.

Nintendo shows their new system on video at E3 and introduces the official name (I'm guessing something with the word Nintendo in it, remember Ultra 64?). The company announces that the system will be postponed until 2001, but throws a bone in the form of jaw-dropping Mario footage. I'm going out on a limb to say that Nintendo surprises all with an N64 Metroid game. Perfect Dark gets delayed again, until June, and the game will attain record sales for a FPS. Finally on Nintendo, I firmly believe that next year industry icon and legendary designer Shigeru Miyamoto will be announced as the replacement of the equally legendary Yamauchi-san and take Nintendo into the next century.

Sega releases Shenmue to critical acclaim as game enthusiasts worldwide wholeheartedly praise the game, but average consumers don't. In an ironic twist, Seaman is panned by game

enthusiasts, but loved by the masses. For the holiday season, Sega drops the price of Dreamcast to \$150.

The video game industry nears \$9 billion in total sales. Gathering of Developers gets sued by real God; company settles out of court and renames as Soda. And Tacos Are Nutritious.

Online gaming continues to grow, but still receives no respect. On the heels of major motion pictures, anime begins to seep into mainstream American culture.

In an important election year, politicians continue to use video games as a scapegoat for societal/parental problems. Congresspeople try to further infringe on American freedoms with talk of more industry policing.

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BEST OF ANIME '99

Akira, *Ghost in the Shell*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Kiki's Delivery Service*, and *Perfect Blue* have paved the way for *Princess Mononoke* and *Spriggan*—both theatrical releases for late '99/early 2000—pushing us ever closer to the threshold of mainstream acceptance. Anime continued to seep in to the American culture in '99 but has yet to hit the mainstream, although it's looking inevitable. I can think of no art form as expressive or beautiful, and only hope that its eventual ascension doesn't bend Japanese anime into some twisted Western commercial venture. Something tells me I don't really need to worry about that too much, so long as there are waitresses fighting it out for millions in cash and property in a



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D. Halverson



D. Smith



C. Alexander

tournament where the loser is forced to strip naked. Coming up: the *Evangelion* movies, *X*, *Trigun*, *Nadesico*, *Gundam Wing*, and more of the great series that have already started this year. Here's the year's best as seen through the eyes of GR's crack (more like on crack) review staff...

BLUE SUBMARINE NO. 6 : Bandai Visual/Anime Village subtitled in English

Okay, now *this* is eye candy. There have been some famous specimens of visual confectionery in the years of anime's cult following here in the States: *Akira*, *Ghost in the Shell*, *Silent Möbius*, and many others were all highly acclaimed for their stunning visuals. *Blue Submarine No. 6* now takes its place at the forefront of those ranks of the sweetly gorgeous.

Blue Submarine takes place in a world where the polar ice caps have melted, and the oceans have risen to cover much of the earth. Yes, I know exactly what you're thinking, but this is far beyond *Waterworld*'s Mad Max-warmed-over vision of the future. To be fair, *Blue Sub*'s creators didn't have to worry about their sets collapsing; their world is crafted out of some of the finest computer animation yet seen, certainly of amazing quality for an OVA series. The hand-drawn character artwork, reminiscent of *Wings of Honneamise*, is equally impressive.



The Submarine of the title is, naturally, humanity's last hope. A race of evolved sea creatures, led by the madman Zorndyke and armed with vast mecha creations, has arisen from the new oceans with world conquest in mind. Ace pilots Tetsu and Mayumi are assigned to take the No. 6 into battle in action sequences that are frankly mind-blowing, but it's worth noting that this show isn't just an extended graphics demo. There is a human story being told in between the sturm und drang, and it's what keeps the viewer coming back for more, although the eye candy is certainly a factor as well.



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BUBBLEGUM CRISIS TOKYO 2040 : AIC/ADV dubbed in English



Folks have been waiting a long time for this one. The original OVA series was a hit in the eighties, but the property sat in limbo for years after. Now acquired by AIC and jolted to life by ADV Films, *Bubblegum Crisis* is back, looking and sounding better than ever.

Bubblegum is the tale of the Knight Sabers, four vigilantes in powered armor (or "hardsuits") who protect Tokyo from rogue Boomers, big ugly mechanical androids developed by the Genom Corporation as part of their plans for world conquest. Okay, it's hokey,



but it's a pretty unscrewupable premise for an action series. It helps that the Sabers are engaging personalities. Nene is indomitably perky, even without her pink hair. Sylia is as cool and intriguing as always. Linna, as the rookie member of the Sabers, is now a strong audience-identification character. Priss...well, she's pretty cool. We'll leave it at that.

As befits a first-rank AIC production, *Bubblegum* looks great, with slick animation and character designs. The (in our opinion) weak yank rock from the OVAs has been replaced by a rougher, synth sound. Together, the visuals and the music are often stunning: Priss dives out of the sky in her blue hardsuit, roundhouses a Boomer's head off as the chords start cranking, and we just think, Damn... ADV's dub is to be congratulated; Hilary Haag's performance as Nene in particular is dead on. Fans of the original *BGC* OVAs may react to this update in weird ways, but if you haven't any emotional hangups to get through, *BGC 2040* is a must-see.



COWBOY BEBOP

Bandai Visual/ADV subtitled in English

"My kingdom for f---ing volume!" – Eddie Oakes

This is one of those shows that you want to turn up. Or down, some of the time, depending on the mood. This isn't Yoko Kanno's first superior soundtrack; fans undoubtedly remember his work on *Macross Plus*. This is, however, the first time the design and attitude of a series has been built around his score. Like *X/1999* to a certain degree, *Cowboy Bebop*'s design and attitude are closely in harmony with its music.

The music in question is a wide variety of jazz and its kinsmen. Quieter moments, as bounty hunters Spike Spiegel and Jet Black contemplate the lousiness of downbeat life in a dirty solar system, are backed by moody blues guitar and harmonica. A chase scene, where Spike charges after a Pembroke Welsh Corgi and its kidnapper (long story), acquires a staccato rhythm from its ska accompaniment. And then there is the theme song, the enigmatically titled "Tank!" a thunderous big-band number perfectly matched to Steranko-esque pop-art imagery.

Bebop is, in theory, an action series, but its tone varies from episode to episode. Sometimes it's dead serious, but other episodes feel like a Blues Brothers kind of chase-comedy. It's never, ever boring, though. The animation is sharp, smooth, and detailed, some of the finest yet in a TV series, and the direction is often masterful; note in particular the opening of the

first episode, with its intricate editing. Toshihiro Kawamoto's character designs (insert a loud masher's whistle here for the lovely Faye Valentine) are original and individual. Altogether, *Cowboy Bebop* has "next big thing" written all over it; it's a fascinating vision of the future, and you can't help but love the music.



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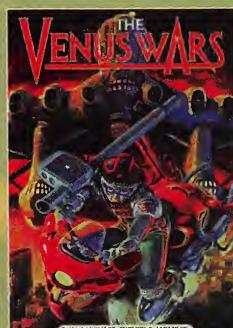
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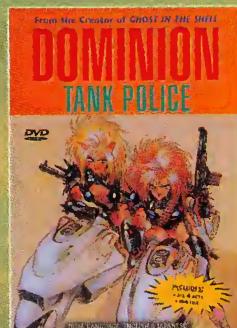
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NINJA RESURRECTION : Phoenix/ADV dubbed in English

Yes, we know, they're not actually the sequel to *Ninja Scroll*, but the *Ninja Resurrection* OVAs (*Jubei's Revenge* and *Hell Spawn*) don't need a pedigree to give them credibility. They stand quite firmly upon their own merits. The quality of the animation and the hideous intensity of the stories being told put them on a level with the best in anime today.

Resurrection (*Makai Tensho* for you naughty fansub collectors) is the story of Jubei, part-time henchman of the Tokugawa Shogunate and full-time killer of approximately everything. As luck or fate would have it, he has an unfortunate tendency to face off with the embodiment of evil far, far too often. But then if the Devil weren't threatening to rebirth himself into 17th-century Japan, the series wouldn't be any fun at all. Actually, one wonders if this show should be described as "fun." At its high points, it is mind-bendingly violent (this from a veteran of *Akira* and *Fist of the North Star*) and unremittingly intense. So perhaps it's not what we commonly consider entertainment. But just try and pull your eyes away.

Ninja Resurrection's frequently appalling subject matter never fails to receive a slick, professional

presentation, both from the original animation and score and ADV Films' English dub (particular props go out to Travis Dean, who does a fine job with the voice-over narration). It should be made quite clear, however, that there are a great many anime enthusiasts who will absolutely not want to see this. Those who this show is aimed at, on the other hand, know who they are, and are probably on their way to purchase it already.



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OUTLAW STAR : Sunrise/Bandai Visual/Anime Village subtitled in English

Time to root around in your grandparents' attic. Find a stack of old dime-novel westerns, a few years worth of *Black Mask* magazine, and several boxes of Astounding S-F. Take the lot downstairs and throw it in a blender for a minute. The result should be *Outlaw Star*, which draws influences from all over the map of classic pulp fiction to spin an imaginative tale of far-future adventure.



If his creators are followers of the pulps, hero Gene Starwind is certainly not. If he'd studied his Mickey Spillane, he might have known that you should never, ever accept a body-guarding job from a mysterious blonde, especially if she wants you to keep an eye on her mysterious suitcase. That is, of course, exactly what he does in the first episode. By the end of the second, he's on the run



from the cops, assorted two-bit thugs, and Taoist wizard space pirates (plus their legion of android assassins).

The action is sooo-pib (tm Bart Simpson) throughout: bar brawls, shootouts, hovercar chases, grapple-and-board space battles, and continuous verbal sparring between Gene and his smart-mouthed backup Jim Hawking. For TV, the animation rocks. The style is reminiscent of *Lodoss War*, except with actual, well, animation. Topping it all off is a wicked soundtrack. It's impossible not to stomp and sing along to the opening theme, "Through The Night," which David Lee Roth and Eddie Van Halen would have been proud to create. Connoisseurs of quality sci-fi anime, or burns like us who don't know what "connoisseur" means but do dig a laugh and a well-choreographed gunfight, are advised to screen *Outlaw Star* at their earliest convenience.

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PERFECT BLUE : Studio Madhouse/ Manga Video dubbed in English

It's an interesting coincidence that this would receive a theatrical release at the same time as Miyazaki's *The Princess Mononoke*. Studio Madhouse has historically been a sort of anti-Ghibli (remember *Vampire Hunter D*), and their latest major work is in some ways *Mononoke*'s thematic opposite. *Perfect Blue* is a claustrophobic contemporary thriller, with a far narrower scope than Miyazaki's epic fantasy, although it is in no way any less intense.

Perfect Blue may be hard for an American audience to grasp, initially; it assumes that its viewers are familiar with certain Japanese cultural phenomena. The lead is Mima Kiriko, an idol pop star (a concept you may have



encountered in *Key The Metal Idol*), who decides to pack in her flagging musical career in favor of acting. Her devoted otaku (colloquialism for "obsessed fan") object rather vehemently, however, particularly due to the character of her first roles, and it becomes evident that some of them have far too much of their identities tied to hers.

It's been argued by some that Americans won't understand the whole idol otaku thing, but upon reflection, similar ground has been covered in some notable films, like Stephen King's *Misery*. *Star 80* would be a better comparison, though; *Misery* had comic undertones, while *Blue* is a purely dramatic creation, and the final ten minutes reach an absolutely nail-biting pitch. *Perfect Blue* is of a character uncommon in U.S.-released anime: try to count the number of mature, adult animated dramas you've seen in the last year. Fansubs don't count. You owe it to yourself to see this, and Manga Video is to be congratulated for exposing it to such wide recognition.



PRINCESS MONONOKE : Studio Ghibli/ Miramax Films dubbed in English

You don't usually see movies like this anymore. Hollywood budgets have grown tighter, and directorial ambition has perhaps grown smaller, so it's rare that you can go to the theater and watch a genuine epic these days. Hayao Miyazaki's *The Princess Mononoke* is as epic as they come, however, a fantastic tale of ancient Japan on a level with films like *Seven Samurai* and *Ben-Hur*. It may surprise some American viewers to witness an animated film of this maturity and scope. Then again, animation has always been the best format for realizing great flights of the imagination.

Miyazaki is the greatest Japanese director of animation, and one of the best directors of his nation, easily on the level of artists like Akira Kurosawa. Indeed, *Mononoke* reminds one somewhat of Kurosawa's best; like *Samurai* and *Ran*, it's full of intense action, but the humanity of the characters and the ideals at stake never get lost.

It's the story of a complex conflict, with a town of iron miners pitted against the spirits of the forest that they're destroying. Normally you'd expect this to be the setting for one of the Manichaean battles Disney seems so fond of, but Miyazaki takes the time to show that both sides are neither wrong nor right. The ironworkers are refugees from ordinary society, down-and-outs who've found a niche and want to keep it. Their leader, Lady Eboshi (Minnie Driver, from *Circle of Friends*), bears a striking resemblance to *Snow White*'s Wicked Queen, but she's pragmatic, not evil, and harbors a streak of practical altruism. The forest spirits, meanwhile, have noble motivations, but their goal is still conquest, not peaceful coexistence.



Into the middle of the war comes Prince Ashitaka (Billy Crudup), the heir of a far-flung tribe. He leaves his home after slaying a gigantic demon (only the first of the film's many amazing creations), which has infected him with a strange plague that will soon kill him. The demon, it turns out, is a giant boar, once a benevolent god, who was wounded by the iron-workers and driven mad by his hatred, which turned him into the demon. Thus the real enemy in the conflict is symbolized from the beginning: the irrational anger that prevents both sides from successfully reconciling.

Mononoke is notable for the quality of its animation, which is the best to ever come out of Miyazaki's supremely talented Studio Ghibli, and also the quality of its dub, which was labored over by Miramax for some time. The script was adapted by noted author Neil Gaiman ("Sandman"), and the cast includes many instantly recognizable names. Gillian Anderson (*The X-Files*) invests the great wolf-god Moro with intense anger, but also great age; she seems to wish for a simple end to the conflict as much as revenge. Moro's human daughter San, the princess of the title, is voiced by Claire Danes in a performance that successfully conveys her divided personality.

The Princess Mononoke, for whatever reason, was snubbed in the Best Foreign Film competition at the Academy Awards when it was first released in Japan (where it set an all-time box-office record). This year, however, it has a chance to be nominated for Best Picture, an honor which it richly deserves. With its powerful themes, strong performances, and breathtaking visuals, *The Princess Mononoke* is the equal of any film released this year and any animated film ever made.



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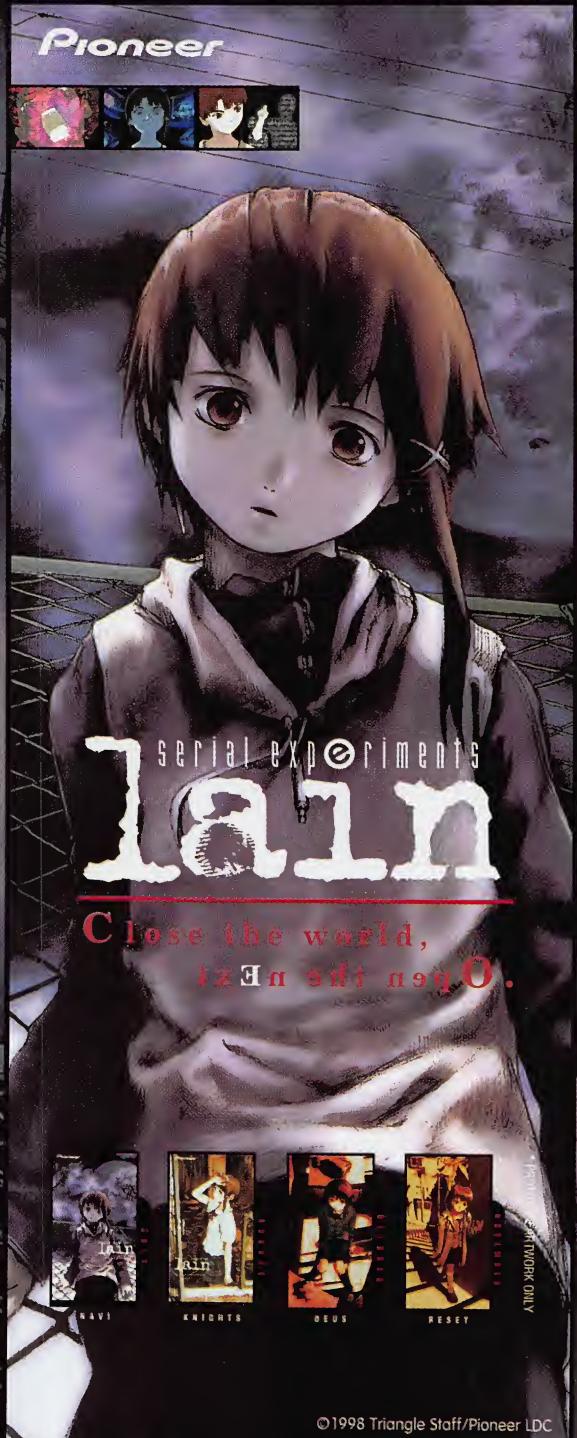
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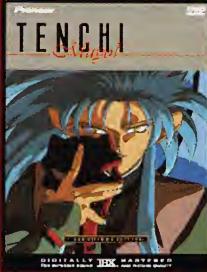
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Queen Emeraldas



Leiji Matsumoto/ ADV Films

dubbed in English

Leiji Matsumoto has probably suffered more at the hands of Americans than any other great creator of anime. His *Space Battleship Yamato* was turned into *Starblazers* over here, and his Captain Harlock epics were butchered at least twice, as chronicled in Corn Pone Flicks' hilarious, tragic *Bad American Dubbing* documentaries. Thankfully, ADV Films has arrived to do right (more or less) by his latest work *Queen Emeraldas*, an epic OVA series descended from the Harlock tales.

Matsumoto's work rubs some the wrong way. In certain circles, it's a sort of badge of honor to have stayed awake through his *Arcadia Of My Youth*. Strictly speaking, though, *Emeraldas* is only based on his manga creation; the anime was handled by other staff. The result is like Matsumoto for those who hate Matsumoto. It features his superb designs (Emeraldas herself is frankly awe inspiring) and the general character of his universe, but a slightly quicker pace and higher level of action. It's still classic old-style space opera, though, given extra impact by the addition of great 3D computer animation.

The dubbing (ah, always the dubbing) is a bit of a sticking point. It's no Malibu *Harlock* ("I jumped!" Woo-hoo!), but *Emeraldas* is still better appreciated subtitled, even considering that the original script was a little on the heavy side. That consideration aside, it's great to see this get an American release. Long may the skull and crossbones fly over the sea of stars.



Revolutionary Girl Utena

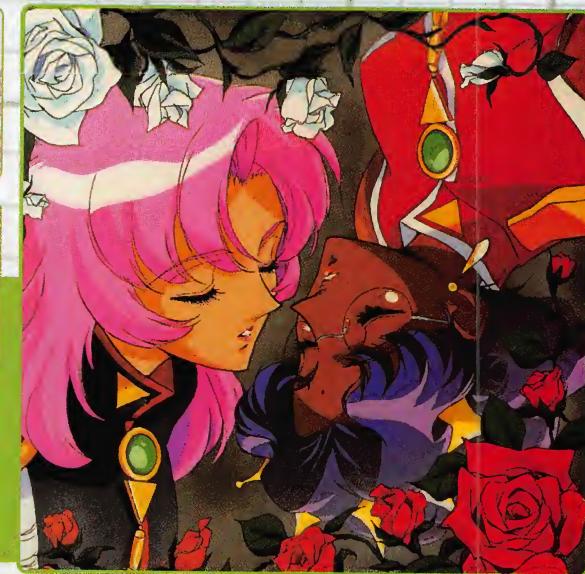
Software Sculptors

subtitled in English

"Shoujo" means "girl." Thus "Shoujo Kakumei Uteta," Girl Revolutionary Uteta. "Shoujo" also refers to an art style, though, named for its presumed target audience. *Revolutionary Girl Uteta* is, in theory, a shoujo series, featuring the style's uniformly effeminate characters. But thematically, this is not effeminate. This is not *Sailor Moon* shoujo. This is *X*, *Kodomo no Omocha*, *Rose Of Versailles* shoujo. This is F'N MANLY SHOUJO~!

Forget trying to understand this show. Plunge yourself into it. Tenjou Uteta is a new student at the Ohtori Academy, on a quest to find the prince who gave her a life purpose: to become a prince herself and save damsels in distress. That, by the way, is why she wears such a fetchingly-altered boy's uniform. She soon has a damsel to save, and a quest to complete: by accident (isn't it?) she becomes the fiancé of the Rose Bride, Anthy Himemiya, a girl who embodies power to bring world revolution. Anthy must be defended, in duels against the scheming members of the Academy student council.

Utena stuns in so many ways. Its characters are beautifully designed and fully realized; they are instantly engaging. The individual episodes veer from epochal duels to teenage hi-jinks to absurdist comedy; the overarching plot, which spreads its web over thirty-nine episodes (not thirteen, SS...) is dangerously gripping. The music...the music is fearsome, from the Masami Okui opening to the choral-metal duel themes. Uteta is like nothing ever released in the US. It must be seen to be believed.



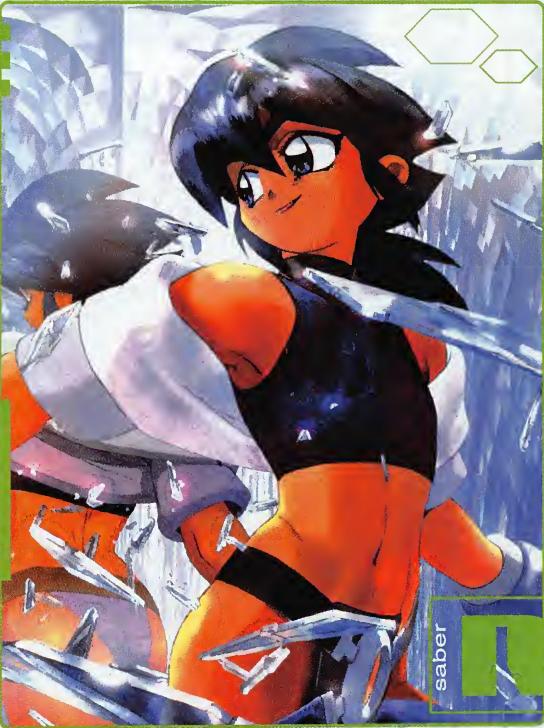
subtitled in English **Bandai Visual/ Anime Village** **SABER MARIONETTE R**

And so we return to Terra 2, to see the past history of Cherry, Bloodberry, and Lime, stars of *Saber Marionette J.* *Saber Marionette R* is the OVA prequel to J, taking place 200 years before the three young androids awakened from stasis. Lime and Cherry are the bodyguards of Junior, prince of the nation of Romana. Forced to flee their lives with Bloodberry (consort to Junior's father), after Romana is conquered by Star Face, they set off to find a way to liberate their home, and discover the motivation behind the assault.

Yes, the names make it sound goofy, but *R* is in fact much more serious than *J*, reaching some powerful peaks of intensity. It's that intensity that makes it so involving, though; the characters we grew to know and love in the lighthearted TV series are now fighting for their lives. An adventure like this lives or dies by its villains, and Star Face and his hench-doms fit the bill perfectly; they're deadly serious, almost to an

unsettling degree.

Saber Marionette R is particularly notable for the Megumi Hayashibara's performance as Lime, the lead marionette. Tira Misu and Rei Ayanami proved her range, but most would agree that their favorites are roles like this (and Lina Inverse), where she can absolutely go for broke. The show also benefits from its OVA status; there are fewer constraints on the content, and the animation is substantially improved. Those who grew a little too attached to the marionettes in *J* might want to steer clear of *R*, lest they have trouble sleeping afterwards, but it's an involving experience for those who can hack it.



subtitled in English **Pioneer : serial experiments lain**

More than any series since *Vampire Princess Miyu*, to which it owes an obvious stylistic debt, *Serial Experiments Lain* succeeds in creating an absolutely absorbing atmosphere of suspense. Indeed, I never thought I'd say this, but *Lain* manages to be even spookier



than Miyu was. Miyu was, at least to some degree, accessible. You had an idea of what she was thinking. *Lain* remains impenetrable, and thus intriguing and unsettling.

Lain takes place, according to a voice-over before the introduction, in the "Present day. Present time." But the voice is laughing. Really, *Lain's* world is almost, but not quite, recognizable. It's not half so enigmatic as *Lain* herself, though. Iwakura *Lain* is a junior-high student, who seems to be slipping between reality and the "Wired," the virtual environment of computer networks. Apparently you can leave the one and live in the other. So says one of *Lain's* fellow students, who commits suicide and proceeds to e-mail her friends from the hereafter.

It becomes apparent that there are two Lains. The other Lain is hearsay, a phantom, but she seems to be real. Or is there one Lain, with two minds? The Lain we see seems to be changing... It's amazing to see anime that you can compare to Kieslowski (note the images of phone lines). Unlike *The Double Life of Veronique*, though, *Lain* is about suspense instead of philosophy, at least to some degree. While it enfolds you, it does have a point to make, about the direction society may be heading in the present day, and present time.



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BEST OF GR SYNTHETIX '99

In '99, the plastic poured like never before. The spark that Todd McFarlane ignited during the previous years burst into flame, as all manner of highly detailed, skillfully painted figures based on movies, comics, and, finally, video games, began to fight for shelf space in venues from comic shops to toy stores to Babbages and other video game retailers. GR began covering the best of the bunch with a dedicated section back in January, and since have become entrenched in this growing sub-culture. Picking the best figures for '99 was no easy task as just about every major company has had a series or solo figure worth owning. Always remember, if you want your children to get a bunch of money for selling your stuff after you're too old to notice it's missing, never take action figures out of the package. There's also nothing quite like the smell that emits from a McFarlane Toy.

**BEST ACTION FIGURE 1999:
MANDARIN SPRYN: THE SCARLET EDGE**

Looking at Mandarin Spawn from the Dark Ages collection purely as a sculpture, one must marvel at this seven dollar toy's exquisite detail. Looking further at the paint, it's obvious that Todd either sold his soul or spends a lot of time at the factory weeding out employees with shaky hands. Mandarin Spawn lacks a lot of articulation, but it's well worth the trade-off for this incredible looking desk mate. My other toys don't dare go near him.

'99 ACTION FIGURE SERIES TOP 10...

#1: Series 14 Spawn Dark Ages: Mandarin Spawn, Spawn the Black Heart, Viper King, Iguantus and Tuskadon, Tormentor, and The Necromancer. From the ultimate giver of pain to the worlds sexiest and most powerful witch (she commands her own undead army) these six put the fun back in being evil.

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BEST OF CR SYNTHETMTIX '99

SYNTHETMTIX

'99 ACTION FIGURE SERIES TOP 10...

#2:

J. Scott Campbell's Danger Girl: Abbey Chase, Natalia Kassle, Sydney Savage and Major Maxim. McFarlane Toys have outdone themselves yet again. Each figure comes with an impressive custom diorama with striking detail. You can't pick just one of these beauties, no matter how hard you try. OK, Natalia.

Happy? The real Danger here is that they may disappear rather quickly. All four are available now but something tells me they won't last long.



ABBEY CHASE



NATALIA KASSLE



SYDNEY SAVAGE



MAJOR MAXIM



||||| . . .

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BEST OF GR SYNTHEPIX '99

'99 ACTION FIGURE SERIES TOP 10...

#3: Techno Spawn: Spawn, Gorilla, Alligator, Warthog, Rhino and Ostrich. Cybernetic organisms taken to the McFarlane extreme.



#4: Iron Giant: Trendmaster's did the movie complete justice, unlike its distributor, Warner Bros., who should be ashamed. Perhaps a little envious? Regardless, the 7-inch figures - Transforming and Build and Battle Iron Giant (they do just what the package says) - are impeccably detailed and definitely win the all-time-greatest-packaging award. The larger toys are impressive as well. Get 'em while they last.



Metal Gear Solid: Solid Snake, Meryl Silverburgh, Ninja, Revolver Ocelot, Liquid Snake, Vulcan Raven, Psycho Mantis, and my personal favorite, Sniper Wolf. Manufactured in '98 these eight beauties showed up in '99 and became hugely successful on the heels of one of the greatest PlayStation games ever devised.

#5:



Crash Bandicoot Series 2: Dr. N. Tropy, Dingodile, Wave Rider Coco, High Flying Crash, Deep Dive Crash, Dr. N. Gin, and Moto Crash and Coco. Dr. N. Tropy actually has a lenticular clock on his torso! ReSaurus once again did all fur-bearin' creatures justice with their second Crash offering. Now if they'd only release their announced Gex and Tenth lines, life would be complete.

#6:



BEST OF CR SYNTHEIX '99

'99 ACTION FIGURE SERIES TOP 10...

#7: **Tekken 3:** Epoch's Devil Jin, True Ogre, Heihachi Mishima, and Yoshimitsu. Excellent detail. Jin has individually painted toenails and fingernails. Each figure is sculpted by Hiroki Hayashi. (He's real good.)



Darkstalkers 3: Jon Talbain with Baby Bonnie Hood, Dimitri Maximoff with Lilith Aensland, and Victor Von Gerdenheim and friends by Toy Biz. With excellent detail throughout and lots of goods packed in with each, here's another video game license done right. They don't match the Japanese versions, but they're exceptional otherwise.



#9: **Star Wars: Episode 1- Commtech:** Hasbro's Senator Palpatine, Ric Olie, Darth Sidious, C-3PO and the star of the bunch, Watto, can all talk via the included chip and even interact using the Commtech reader. Watto is especially well detailed. And isn't he really the best new Star Wars character?



Buffy the Vampire Slayer: You wanted Moore, didn't cha? The people that brought us Lady Death, Evil Ernie, and Witchblade are back with the first wave of figures based on America's favorite Slayer, Buffy. After the 30-page cover story EW just did, the Buffy supply will likely drain fast. Go nail 'em while you can.



IMPORT FIGURES + RARE COLLECTIBLES

Import figures were bigger than ever this year as video game and anime licenses continue to make their way west. Just ask Inteleg (at inteleg.com), importer of all that is Japanese. Here's some of '99's most memorable:



Nadesico



Neon Genesis Evangelion



SDF Macross

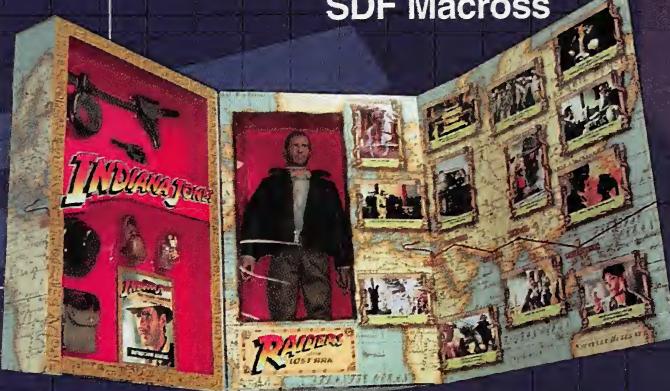
Larger scale toys and collectables...

We named the dog Indy...

If you can find one, this authentic Indiana Jones replica (from Toys McCoy Japan) at \$359.99 is one of the finest and rarest collectable figures one can attain. Only 3000 were made, but check these assets. Indiana packs a Smith and Wesson M-1917 .45 caliber pistol replica with a hammer that cocks and a spinning cylinder, a whip braided from 0.5 mm thin-skinned hose leather, knitted socks, wool pants with pockets and lining, a real leather jacket with lining and inner pockets, and other perfectly replicated accessories and features. He's even got interchangeable hands so he can swipe the golden idol! Check out toysyndicate.com for this and other hard to find items.

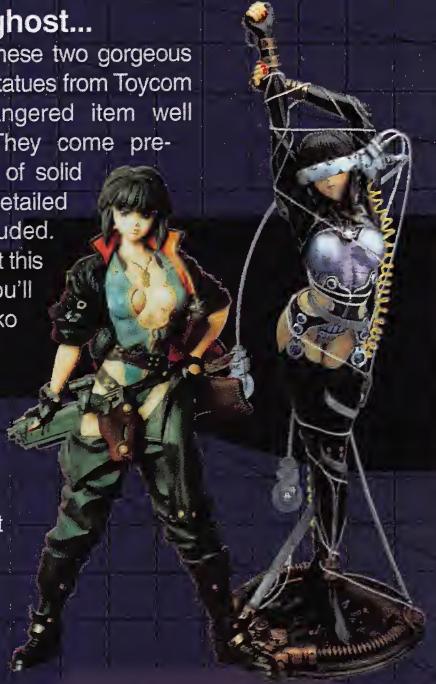
And the grandest of all toys for '99 is...

Aibo, Sony's incredible robot dog. With 18 motors and the processing power of a desktop PC, the ERS-110 from the Sony Digital Lab in Tokyo can sit, walk, play, and stretch like the real thing. Aibo expresses his emotions with his eyes (green is happy and red is angry), voice and posture and can even recognize color through a CCD monitor in his head! He recognizes sound and reacts to your touch. Aibo lets you know when he's hungry and sad, in case you neglect the little guy. As a proud owner, you program Aibo with the optional performer kit and load up your intel via his memory stick port. Of course, you'll have to find one first. The 3,000 Aibo's available in Japan sold out in 20 minutes and the 2,000 U.S. models in mere hours. Hopefully, a new model will surface soon so more people can enjoy this amazing new technology.



Get into this ghost...

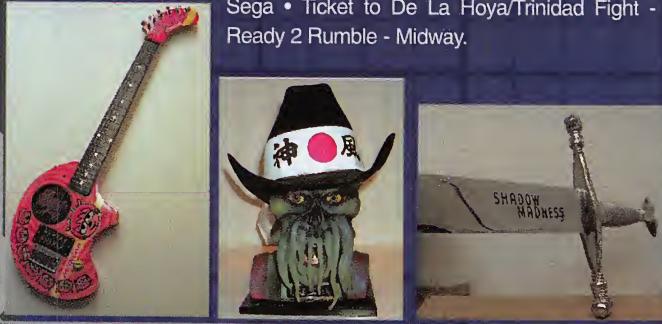
At \$159.99 each, these two gorgeous Ghost in the Shell statues from Toycom are another endangered item well worth obtaining. They come pre-painted, are made of solid cast resin, and detailed bases are included. Besides the fact that this is the closest you'll ever get to Motoko "Major" Kusanagi, look for them to skyrocket in value as the years go by. Like you're ever going to sell her. It makes a great excuse to buy her, though!



BEST PROMOTIONAL ITEMS OF '99

We'd like to thank all of the creative PR directors out there who turn games in to events and bring smiles to our faces with cool promotional items such as these...

The Ape Escape Stuffed Monkey set and Light Sabre - Sony Computer • Rising Zan Cowboy Hat - Vatical Entertainment • Awesome Um Jammer Lammy Electric Guitar (promo item of the decade!) - Sony • Fox goody crate: NHL Jersey; LA Dodger Game Tickets; DVD of X-Files, There's Something About Mary and Alien Collection • Initiated Shadow Madness Medieval Fighting Sword - Crave Entertainment • Military Ammo Case containing Alien Trilogy, Predator, an embroidered shirt, and the AvP Game - Fox Interactive • Personalized MX Jersey - Championship Motocross Featuring Ricky Carmichael - THQ • Silver Cartridge Holder Case - Star Wars: Episode One: Racer - Nintendo • Sonic the Hedgehog Backpack (the king of all back packs complete with a rubber under carriage) - Sonic Adventure - Sega • Ticket to De La Hoya/Trinidad Fight - Ready 2 Rumble - Midway.

**BEST DVDS '99**

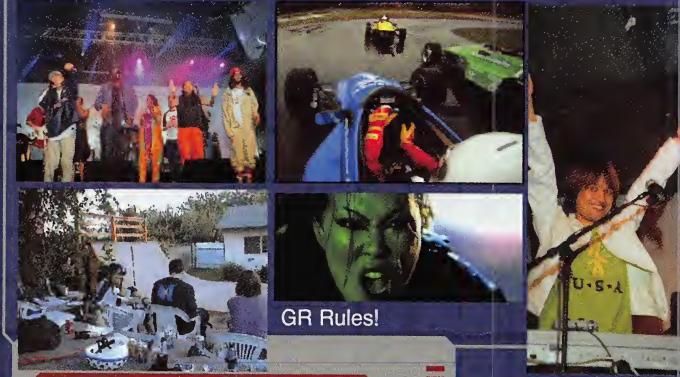
After much deliberation (and clever division!) these are the DVD's we have chosen as the year's best. From D. Halverson we get South Park, Matrix, and Prince of Egypt, from Brady Fiechter, A Simple Plan, Elizabeth, and Titanic, and from Mike Hobbs, The Alien Collection, Brazil Criterion box, and the Kubrick Collection. We all agreed on Shakespeare in Love as the 10th to show that we're not all about sex, drugs, and big explosions.

A Simple Plan
Alien Collection
Brazil Criterion Collection
Elizabeth
Matrix
Prince of Egypt
Shakespeare in Love
South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut
Stanley Kubrick Collection
Titanic

**BEST PROMOTIONAL EVENTS OF '99**

We'd like to thank all of the creative PR directors out there who turn games in to promotional events and bring smiles to our faces with cool promotional events such as these...

Our intimate Dinner with Agent "S" (DC commercial heroine) - Sega DC - Sega • The KROQ Weenie Roast - Sega Dreamcast - Sega • Laguna Seca Raceway Day at the Races (we won) - Test Drive Rally — Infogrames • Las Vegas Trip/Ricky Carmichael Exhibition - Championship Motocross Featuring Ricky Carmichael - THQ • Neversoft Backyard BBQ/Skate Ramp Party (Bactine included) - Tony Hawk's Pro Skater - Neversoft • Princess Mononoke Exclusive Screening - Princess Mononoke Anime - Miramax Films • Seattle Mariners Game/Harbor Boat Dinner/Cruise - Donkey Kong 64 - Nintendo • Sega Dreamcast Bi-Coastal Launch Parties (head... still ...hurts) - Sega Dreamcast - Sega • Trip to Square of Japan - Vagrant Story - Square • Um Jammer Lammy Launch Party at N.Y. Roxy - Um Jammer Lammy - Sony

**CR EDITORS' TOP MUSIC PICKS '99**

The chances of us agreeing on this one was decided as soon as Tori Amos and Drain were mentioned in the same room.

D. Halverson

1. **Drain** - Freaks of Nature
2. **Korn** (title tba at press time)
3. **Cyclefly** - Generation Sap
4. **Filter** - Title of Record
5. **Creed** - Human Clay
6. **Virgos Merlot** - Signs of a Vacant Soul
7. **David Bowie** - Hours
8. **South Park Movie** Soundtrack
9. **Kid Rock** - Devil Without a Cause
10. **Chemical Brothers** - Surrender

Mike Hobbs

1. **Orbital** - Middle of Nowhere
2. **Underworld** - Beaucoup Fish
3. **Aphex Twin** - Windowlicker (Japanese edition)
4. **Philip Glass/Uakti** - Aguas Da...
5. **Caustic Window** - Compilation
6. **u-ziq** - Royal Astronomy
7. **The Beatles** - Yellow Submarine
8. **Tori Amos** - To Venus and Back
9. **Chemical Brothers** - Surrender
10. **Nine Inch Nails** - the Fragile



B. Fiechter

1. **Lapdog** - Lapdog
2. **Stone Temple Pilots** - No. 4
3. **Tori Amos** - To Venus and Back
4. **Jonatha Brooke** - Live
5. **Eyes Wide Shut** Soundtrack
6. **Live** - Distance to Here
7. **Moby** - Play
8. **Nine Inch Nails** - the Fragile
9. **Days of the New** - Days of the New
10. **Rushmore** Soundtrack

M. Puccini

1. **2Pac** - 2Pac's Greatest Hits
2. **Handsome Boy Modeling School (DJ Shadow, Beastie Boys)** - So...How's Your Girl?
3. **Too Short** - Can't Stay Away
4. **Public Enemy** - There's A Poison Goin' On
5. **DJ Spooky vs. The Freight Elevator Quartet** - File Under Futurism
6. **Chemical Brothers** - Surrender
7. **Mary J. Blige** - Mary
8. **R. Kelly** - R...
9. **Red Hot Chili Peppers** - Californication
10. **Nine Inch Nails** - the Fragile

ON THE SIDE...

SOME OF THE YEAR'S BEST PERIPHERALS

The Konami guitar controller will set you back between sixty and seventy dollars from an importer (provided you can find someone who stocks the thing at all), it is large and unwieldy and will thus cost extra to ship, and it is only used for playing one particularly obscure Japanese music game. It receives our absolutely highest recommendation. Playing Konami's Guitar Freaks with the Plastic Axe of Fear and Destruction is more fun than one had previously thought it was possible to have with a videogame console, and damn, the thing looks cool up on the mantelpiece.



When it comes to aftermarket N64 controllers, you'd be hard pressed to do better than Hori's amazing mini pad, currently available in Japan. While the Z trigger is located up top, which takes getting used to, everything else is superior to any pad available the U.S. You'll have to get one from an importer but trust us; it's worth the hassle. Otherwise stick with Nintendo's standard-issue pad.



Most PS racing wheels are awkward and undesirable, but this compact model from Pelican benefits from solid construction and a good overall feel. Long travel paddles act as analog accelerator and brake controls in NegCon mode, and the wheel can also replicate Dual Shock wands.



Though this Dreamcast gun from Interact isn't quite as comfortable as the Sega designed gun (only available in Japan), this is a solid substitute. The accuracy is on par with the Sega gun, and Interact has included a handy reloading trigger and turbo fire modes.

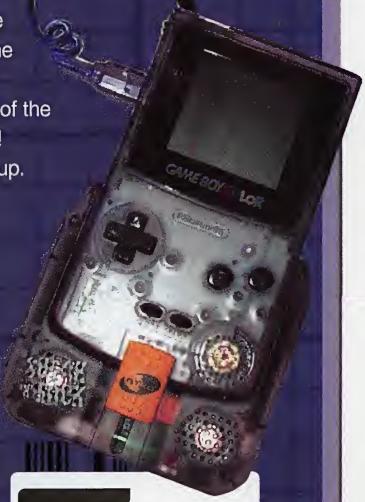


Mad Catz went all out on this N64 fishing rod. Not only does it feature Rumble Pak compatibility, but it also offers the irresistible gimmick of a flexing rod. As fish take bites on the hook, a little motor pulls the tip of the rod down simulating a strike. The controller is a bit heavy, however, when laden with batteries and Rumble Pak.



Dress up your Game Boy Color in high style with Nyko's Shock Rock, a rumble pak/stereo-sound/power pack/love handle compilation (that does it all good) and the first truly great light for the decade-old machine, Nyko's Worm Light, which feeds off of the system's power. No batteries! This is the ultimate GBC set-up.

Agetec's direct Sega Japan port is the best Dreamcast Arcade joystick money can buy. The Japanese traditionally loose-feeling joystick makes controlling games like Power Stone a breeze. The buttons are nice and clicky as well.





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IS IT THE SECOND ACT OR THE SECOND COMING? IS IT AN EVOLUTION OR A REVOLUTION?

IS IT A SEQUEL OR A QUANTUM LEAP? WHAT IS THE MEANING OF TWO? TOO? TO?

COMING SOON GRAN TURISMO® 2



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